The Washington Monthly

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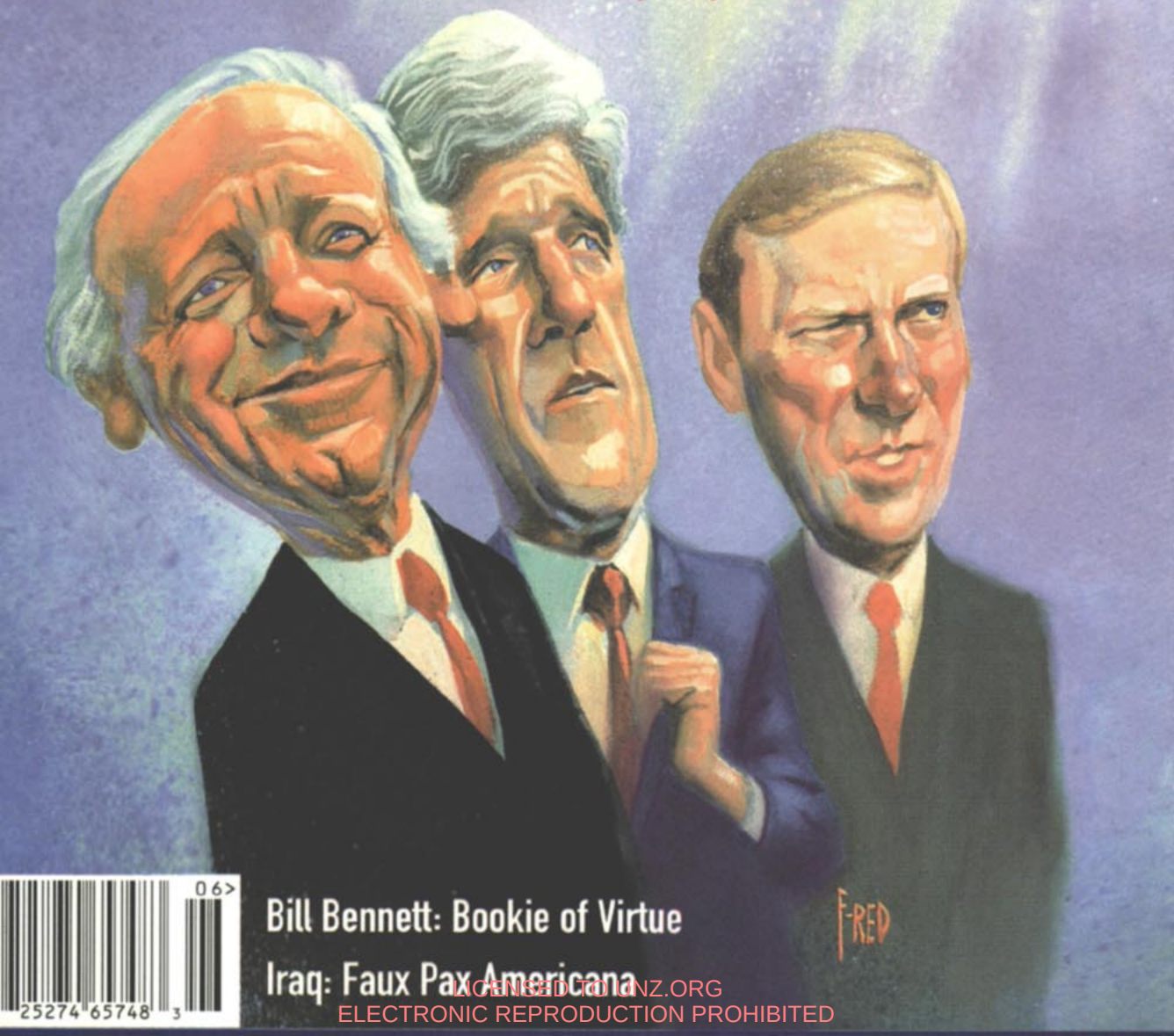
Do They Have a Prayer?

Why only God can save the Democrats. By Amy Sullivan



Bill Bennett: Bookie of Virtue

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Letters

The *Con* in Conservative

Hats off to Joshua Micah Marshall's unveiling of the messianic mission of the neocons to "fix" the Middle East, in his article "Practice to Deceive" (April). But while Marshall does an admirable job of assessing the earthly risks incurred by the administration's implementation of its cartoon ideology, he accepts the basic worldview: that Islamic terrorism is rooted in Muslim fundamentalism and in the poverty and corruption of the "failed" Arab States. That worldview suggests only two alternatives: either "fix" the Middle East, Captain America-style, or do nothing and allow the bin Ladens to continue their war of terror.

I suppose it would be too much to ask that Marshall might place just a teensy bit of the onus for Islamic terrorism on the political, economic, and military intervention of the United States in the Middle East during the past 50-odd years, which might suggest that there is a third option for defusing Islamic terrorism: allowing genuine self-determination in that region by treating them with a little respect. But of course, there is a three-letter word that explains why that is simply not an option for those who are so unfortunate as to sit atop of a whole mess of fossilized vegetation.

KESHINI LADDUWAHETTY
Washington, D.C.

Joshua Micah Marshall asks what we will do if the Iraqis choose a government we can't live with. The first National Assembly election is highly likely to produce a government led by a coalition of Shi'a religious parties. Iraq's population is highly divided by ethnic and religious groups that will largely vote for their own, leading to a fractured parliament that works to the advantage of religious parties. Two rival secular parties split the Kurds, who constitute under a quarter of Iraq's population. Shi'a

April 2003

Arabs constitute 60 percent of the country, and while secular Shi'a parties will be organizing from scratch, Shi'a religious parties will benefit from an existing network of mosques from which to tap funds, recruit workers, and conduct their political campaigns.

Finally, nascent secular parties of the Sunni Arabs, who make up 17 percent of Iraq's population, are likely to be splintered and weak—but once again Sunni religious parties that can exploit Sunni mosques will have an edge. Since no single party will win a majority of votes, Shi'a religious parties are likely to lead in forming a coalition. We can only presume that this is not the girl that the neo-cons had hoped to walk home from the dance.

DENNIS JONES
Vienna, Va.

Joshua Micah Marshall writes, "it's conceivable that bold American action could democratize the Middle East." But it really isn't. And some conservatives—those few who value democracy and are free of the aristocratic pretensions and longings of the *National Review* crowd—know this. For most of them, however, a democratic Near East means nothing more than a pleasing facade behind which the supranationals might work their will free of any serious opposition. With any luck, they might eventually repeat the process at home. These patriots are fakes and frauds.

ALEX MACDONALD
San Francisco, Calif.

Women's Work

You can drag out all the fancy sociological explanations that you want as to why women seem far more concerned than men about homeland security, but it boils down to one thing: Men just don't "do" risk assessment ("Homeland Security is for Girls," Garance Franke-Ruta, April).

This fact first became clear to me several years ago, when on a vacation trip to the beach I watched my husband and the husband of a friend—both of them men with advanced degrees from prestigious institutions of higher learning and with off-the-charts IQs—casually conversing in the ocean, while my husband would occasionally lift our two-year-old daughter over his head so that the breakers, which were over his head, wouldn't actually drown her. It did not occur to either man that maybe they should come in from the water. Subsequent adventures in child-rearing have convinced me that persons with the Y chromosome are much, much better at creating danger than in foreseeing it, much less figuring out how to forestall it. You bet homeland security is for girls. And if it's a girl who has had some experience in doing six different things while keeping a toddler away from the steak knives, so much the better. Sally Quinn would be an excellent replacement for Tom Ridge, but just about any old mom would be eminently qualified.

TRACY THOMPSON
Bowie, Md.

Cuban Conundrum

This is just a short note to correct a mistake made over and over for the past 40 years, including by Damien Cave ("Castro's Casting Couch," April): When he was overthrown by Fidel Castro in 1959, Fulgencio Batista never came to the United States. He flew, with his family, to the Dominican Republic, at that time under the Trujillo dictatorship. Afterwards, with the help of the Portuguese and Spanish governments, he was able to leave for

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Europe. While Batista's wife and children were allowed to visit the United States, the Johnson and Nixon administrations denied his visa applications. He died in Europe in 1973 never having set foot in the United States.

RAUL DE CARDENAS
Los Angeles, Calif.

The Write Stuff?

It is crazy to argue that Sen. John Edwards "stumbled" by citing I.F. Stone's remarkable *Trial of Socrates* as his favorite book just because he drew fire from columnist Bob Novak, who attacked Stone as a "lifelong Soviet apologist." ("Bragging Writes," Brent Kendall, April). Novak is a fool, and there is no reason to believe his little tantrum "hurt" Edwards at all. But the *Monthly* did readers a disservice by uncritically repeating his demonstrably false remarks about I.F. Stone.

STEVEN AFTERGOOD
Washington, D.C.

I have never understood why anyone cared what book a candidate has read recently. That is, I didn't understand until I got to the last paragraph of Brent Kendall's "Bragging Writes," where I learned that Vermont Governor Howard Dean's favorite book is Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion.* Who cares if the author made some poor personal choices? The book he wrote is a classic that explores human relationships on many levels. Any candidate perceptive enough to list a book like this as his or her favorite can count on my vote in the next election.

JEFF FRIEDMAN
Anchorage, Alaska

By George!

Matt Cooper's piece ("Rebels With Applause," April) was a breath of fresh air content-wise for the *Monthly*, one of my favorite magazines. However, he left out the great George Carlin, perhaps America's most edge-cutting, subversive stand-up comedian. Carlin was busted with Lenny Bruce in London; became the hippy dippy weatherman on "The Smothers Brothers"; and went on to mock every aspect of American culture in a very consistently subversive way. Ditto for Richard Pryor, who also was not mentioned but is undoubtedly also one of America's greatest, most subversive comics. Leon Harris of CNN recently reported about Carlin explaining how ridiculous it is to believe in a Christian "Sky God" while mocking various alien hypotheses when, Carlin suggested, the alien intervention hypothesis was much more credible scientifically. Harris looked absolutely stunned when the camera came back to him; his puzzled and shocked expression was priceless. That's subversive!

JOHN JENKINS
via email

Corrections:

In our story about Fidel Castro's love affair with Hollywood ("Castro's Casting Couch," April), we reprinted a quote from Steven Spielberg—characterizing an evening with Castro as "the most important eight hours of my life"—that originated in the Cuban press and was later picked up by several media outlets, including Agence France-Press and the *National Review*. It appears that the quote may have been fabricated, and Spielberg denies that he said it. We apologize for including it without attribution.

Additionally, in April's "Tilting At Windmills" column, Charles Peters incorrectly cited Susan Antilla's *Tales From the Boom-Boom Room* as the source for the quote "I got some of my best information through pillow talk," attributed to broker Nikki Haskell. In fact, the quote comes from an interview conducted by *The New York Times'* Timothy O'Brien. We regret the errors.

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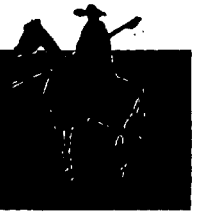
Tilting at Windmills



BY CHARLES PETERS

Merry Moms • Lieberman's Sex Appeal • Howell's Reign
Deep Doo-Doo in Baghdad • Buckley's Swimming Pool

APPEARING ON TIM RUSSERT'S "Meet the Press" some months ago, Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) did not display a command of the information a president should know. Was this just a bad day for the senator? We hope so, but a story recently told to me by a reliable source is less than reassuring.

One evening while he was campaigning for the Senate in North Carolina, Edwards was faced with a choice of several events he might attend. An advance man suggested, "Maybe we ought to go to the reception for Leah Rabin." Edwards responded, "Who's she?" "Yitzhak Rabin's widow," replied the aide. "Who was he?" asked Edwards.

AS MY WIFE AND I WERE WATCHing a congressional hearing on C-SPAN a few nights ago, she remarked, "Why is it that the women sitting behind the senators are almost always good looking?" I explained that members of Congress are noted for their devotion to affirmative action for physically attractive females.

SPEAKING OF AFFIRMATIVE action, I was delighted to see that last month *The New York Times* devoted a front-page story to school integration by income. This is a cause championed by the *Monthly* in several articles over the years by The Century Foundation's Richard Kahlenberg. Economic class, not race, should be the standard for affirmative action. Why give a rich black kid a leg up over a poor white one? Economic affirmative action would aid the blacks who need help the most, those who are held back by poverty. Of course, there is a kind of economic affirmative action now widely used in American higher education—only it works the wrong way, in favor of the privileged and well-connected. Back in 1989, the *Monthly* revealed the big advantage given to legacies by Harvard and other schools. Since then, the situation appears to have become worse. Where the legacies were 20 percent of Middlebury's entering class in 1990, according to *The New York Times*' Jacques Steinberg, by 2002 they made up 45 percent.

HAVE WOMEN BECOME TOO LIBerated? We would, of course, be the last to say so. But we must note that at Ohio University, "Moms' Weekend" seems to be departing from the customary standards of maternal behavior. Alcohol sales exceed those at Halloween and Homecoming, according to the *Athens* (Ohio) *Post*. Paul Shugar, a columnist for the school paper, writes:

"The weekend is really nothing more than a recipe for disaster. Take a group of males 18-25 years old in their sexual prime, add women 35-50 years old and in their sexual prime, stir in some alcohol and then let them bake together in a tightly confined Athens bar, next thing students know, they wake up wondering not where they are but where their mom is."

WHEN THIS MAGAZINE'S JOSHUA Green and *Newsweek*'s Jonathan Alter broke the story about Bill Bennett's expensive gambling habit (see page 8), William Kristol of the *Weekly Standard* came to Bennett's defense: "It would be different if he had written anti-gambling screeds ... "

I can't help pointing out that I don't recall Bill Clinton writing screeds against fooling around. Yet Kristol never hesitated to slam him.

If, by the way, you doubt the seriousness of the habit Bennett was encouraging by his behavior, NBC Nightly News reports that in recent years, gambling among senior citizens has grown from 20 percent to 50 percent. Of them, 6 percent will become "problem" or "pathological" gamblers. NBC interviewed two, a man and a woman, who had completely squandered their savings.

THERE ARE 575 EMPLOYEES OF the District of Columbia who are paid $100,000 or more per year. In Baltimore, a city of similar size, only 34 of the city's employees make that much, reports *The Washington Times*. Even Chicago, a city nearly six times larger than Washington, has 156 fewer employees making $100,000 or more. Yet no one in his right mind would contend that the District of Columbia is more competently governed than Baltimore or Chicago.

ONE PROBLEM CAUSED BY OVERpaying local employees is that the money for their salaries has to come from somewhere, and it often comes from cutting back needed programs. Montgomery County, Md., reports *The Wash-*

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ington Post, is "locked into costly labor agreements negotiated during boom times" and now "faces a $300 million-plus budget gap." One result is that there are 1,000 children in the county, according to another *Post* story by Brigid Schulte, whose parents can't afford to send them to private school and "there's not enough room for them in Head Start."

SPEAKING OF HEAD START, I applaud the Bush administration's efforts to inject some educational standards into the program. Head Start's enormous potential has too often been sabotaged by a bureaucratic culture that has treated it less as an educationally enriching experience and more as custodial daycare for the children and a jobs program for the teachers. But, just as with the rest of his education program, Bush continues to leave too many children behind because his standards are not accompanied by the money to implement them in underfunded schools.

BEN BRADLEE ONCE SAID THAT if you put all the Watergate data into a computer you could figure out who Deep Throat is. A journalism professor at the University of Illinois named Bill Gaines had his students do just that, and the computer answered that Deep Throat is Fred Fielding. Veteran readers know that he's been our number one suspect for more than 20 years. He was a notorious leaker. And as deputy White House counsel throughout the scandal, he knew more than any of the other suspects. He is also a thoroughly engaging man, whom prosecutors and reporters would be strongly inclined to protect if they possibly could. I once attended a small party at Bradlee's at which all the guests fit the profile of big shots from the *Post* and from the world of politics. Kay Graham and Bob Woodward were among them. Only two didn't fit the profiling: I was one, Fielding the other. And I'm not Deep Throat.

SLATE'S TIM NOAH REMINDS me of the colorful past of Rep. Barbara Cubin (R-Wyo.), who recently came to public attention by making what appeared to be a racist remark. Her problem in earlier years was not so much racial as sexual. While a member of the Wyoming legislature she distributed cookies to fellow members that were baked in the shape of penises. During the Florida recount in 2000, she complained to her Republican colleagues, "We're bending over and taking it from the Democrats." When a colleague objected to this formulation, she said, "Quiet down or you'll get a spanking."

Congressmen are noted for their devotion to affirmative action for physically attractive females.

I OFTEN TELL REPORTERS THAT they can learn how to understand other institutions by observing their own. The Jayson Blair story is a classic example of the disasters that can be produced by bosses who press for results without showing equal concern for how the results are achieved. In their zeal for "hot and fast, high-metabolism" journalism, Howell Raines and Gerald Boyd assigned a young reporter about whom there were many doubts to a big story, the Beltway sniper case, without telling his immediate supervisors of the doubts. Then, when he filed stories that relied heavily on anonymous sources, they put the stories on the front page without inquiring about the identity of the sources. Bill Kovach, the highly respected former Washington bureau chief of the *Times*, tells me that he always insisted on knowing who "anonymous" was.

What will happen to Raines and Boyd? Will they be held accountable? And will the one hero of this sorry tale, Metro editor Jonathan Landman, be rewarded for blowing the whistle?

In this respect, what happened at *The Washington Post* after Janet Cooke's unmasking does not inspire optimism. Milton Coleman, the man who protected Cooke until the very end, was rewarded by being made Metro editor, a job he held for more than a decade before having his eye for talent sanctified by being elevated to the position he now holds, deputy managing editor for personnel. On this basis, Gerald Boyd, Blair's principal enabler at the *Times*, can look forward to a long and distinguished career. Boyd's main ally, Howell Raines, cannot rise any higher, since he is already executive editor. Unless of course—watch out, Arthur ...

As for the people who blew the whistle on Cooke, Courtland Milloy has done well. He now has a regular column in the Metro section. But Landman should worry about the fate of Vivian Aplin-Brownlee, who was more persistent than Milloy in pointing out Cooke's tendency to be creative with the facts. Her byline disappeared from the *Post* long ago.

IN THE EARLY 1990S, REPORTS *The Seattle Times*, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms developed guidelines or "red flags" that alerted the agency to dealers who might be trafficking in guns. These red flags include "guns stolen from inventory, missing federal sales records needed by police to solve crimes, having 10 weapons a year traced to crimes, frequently selling multiple guns

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to individual buyers, short times between gun sales and their involvement in crimes." Every one of these red flags has been found, not in just one year, but for several years at Bull's Eye Shooter Supply, the Tacoma, Wash., gun store where John Muhammad acquired the Bushmaster XM15 that was used in the Beltway sniper killings.

Why wasn't Bull's Eye closed down? The Firearm Owners' Protection Act signed by Ronald Reagan in 1986 forbade the ATF to take away any dealer's license unless it could prove the dealer "willfully" violated gun laws.

If these facts from the April 29 *Seattle Times* sound vaguely familiar to you, it might be because most of them appeared in an article by Brent Kendall in the January-February issue of this magazine.

"Sinking Revenue Alarms Charities," read a recent headline in *The Washington Post*. There are a number of explanations for the downturn. But one certainly has to be the United Way scandal and the disillusioning impact it had on potential contributors. And now comes the *Post*'s exposé of the Nature Conservancy, which we all thought was composed of good guys who used the contributions they received to acquire and set aside land that needed to be protected for environmental reasons. Now we learn that land it acquired in places like the Hamptons and Martha's Vineyard was not fully protected, but resold to members of its own board and their family members for "Gatsby-esque" vacation estates.

The new head of the SEC recently told reporters, "I am surprised at how prevalent [wrongdoing] is in our economy. I'm surprised at the day-in and day-out, steady level of malfeasance that comes in under the radar."

There is much in recent news that he could have been referring to. But my favorite example is the attempt by Enron and MCI to get a tax refund on the basis that they have paid too much in taxes because of their lies to investors about their profits.

Close to it in outrageousness is the news that Goldman Sachs actually tried to hire Jack Grubman after insiders knew he was hyping stocks to get investment banking business for Solomon Smith Barney. In fact, his advocates at Solomon, reports *The New York Times*, argued that Grubman should be hired precisely because his stock recommendations could be relied on to bring in lots of investment banking business.

Instead of wallowing in self-congratulation that our warnings about post-war Iraq have come to pass, liberals should try to figure out how to best handle the imperial responsibilities Bush has assumed on our nation's behalf.

Both a factor in the Nature Conservancy scandal and an Achilles heel of the environmental movement is the fact that the movement is often used by the wealthy to protect their neighborhood or view. The environmentalists' fight to keep another Disneyland from intruding on the pastoral splendor of the Middleburg Hunt Country was, for example, largely funded by the fellows who hunt the foxes and own the estates. Now comes another revealing story, this time with Disney on the environmentalists' side: a tax break for electric golf carts used in Disney's model Florida community, Celebration. The tax break is environmentally correct, since the carts are nonpolluting. But it benefits a community whose household income is twice the Florida average. In other words, poor Floridians will subsidize Celebration's clean air.

The Pentagon is planning a major revision of its personnel system. Liberal congressmen and the public employees' unions are hostile to the plan. Unquestionably, there is abundant reason to suspect bad motives on the part of the Bush administration. However, I caution readers to take a fair look. There may be problems with the Pentagon proposal, but major reform is needed. As Paul Light of the Brookings Institution points out:

"Two in five [Pentagon] workers say there are too many layers between themselves and top management, and on average they estimate that one in five of their colleagues in not doing his or her job well. Asked to explain the poor performers, two-fifths say the department does not ask enough of its employees, and another quarter complain that the poor performers are simply not qualified for their jobs."

What is the worst car in America? According to a survey by J.D. Power and Associates, that distinction goes to the Hummer. The $50,000 H2 has 225 problems per 100 vehicles, compared to 76 for the Lexus, and an industry average of 133. Those who remember that I once wrote that the Hummer "looks like it has a license to kill" will know how delighted I am by this news.

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BECAUSE STATE GOVERNMENT IS so thoroughly ignored by most of the media, few people know anything about one major state program: workers' compensation. In many states, the program is in trouble because of a combination of rising medical costs and underfunding by corporations. Lots of companies get away with not paying their share. Ignorance of the program is so widespread that the West Virginia legislature may enact a bill that would tax workers to make up much of the deficit. Why shouldn't they tax workers, you ask? Because the basic idea of the program is that workers give up their right to sue in return for employers promising to provide guaranteed, if modest, compensation for workers' injuries. The workers having surrendered their right to sue, the corporations should live up to their part of the bargain and pay for the program.

LIKE MOST OBSERVERS, I thought that Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Rep. Dick Gephardt (D-Mo.) came off best in the South Carolina debate. I like Gephardt's emphasis on health care and his distaste for the Bush tax cut. He also had a more forceful presence than we have become accustomed to. Lieberman is too conservative for me, but I have to admit he has a nice sense of humor. Recently, on David Letterman's show, he gave 10 reasons why he would make a great president. The last was: "Look at me. Do you honestly think there'll be a sex scandal?"

LEE BOLLINGER, COLUMBIA University's new president, has given a hopeful sign of the kind of reform he wants to make in his graduate school of journalism by naming Nicholas Lemann as dean. Still, Bollinger's plan to improve the school has drawn criticism from the *New York Observer* and the *Washington Post*'s Robert Samuelson, who seem to want to keep the school as it is. They are dead wrong. It has become far too much of a trade school with journalism courses that, like many courses in teachers' colleges, emphasize technique at the expense of substance.

Samuelson acknowledges that Lemann, a former *Monthly* editor, is "a brilliant writer, an exhaustive reporter, a gifted thinker." Doesn't that describe exactly what a graduate school of journalism should aspire to produce? Samuelson says no: "A recent Columbia graduate I know covers high school sports for a small suburban paper." One could reply that that's all Columbia prepares him to do. But that would be unfair to some good teachers and some outstanding graduates. Nevertheless, Columbia should aim more toward turning out Nick Lemanns than high school sports reporters. The Nick Lemanns may cover high school sports along the way—and enjoy doing it—but they will have the ability to meet the more difficult challenge of producing explanatory journalism characterized by fresh thinking and facts that you don't find elsewhere. For example, see Lemann's article about Karl Rove in the May 12 *New Yorker*.

Samuelson, a former president of the *Harvard Crimson* passing himself off as Joe Six Pack, says this is too elitist. But that ignores the fact that Lemann's prose is always accessible. The average person can understand and learn from it if he can find it in the newspapers and magazines he reads. Improving Columbia will mean that he can find it in more places, which means more people—average and otherwise—will be able to learn what they need to know to be good citizens of this republic.

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY IS ONE of my favorite writers. A staple of this column has been excerpts from his *New Yorker* piece about the schedule for a conservative radio network that began: "6:30 a.m. Habla Espanol: How to Communicate With Your Servants." My fondness for this piece is motivated by my admiration for his ability to make fun of his own class. In his recent *Washington Schlepped Here*, however, he momentarily reveals that his background is definitely not blue collar. He is explaining the difficulty of getting something built on the National Mall. Seeking a comparison that everyone will understand, he writes, "If you think that getting a zoning variance for your swimming pool is hard ..."

I'M GLAD THAT SADDAM HUSsein has been removed from power. Does that mean I regret opposing Bush's rush to war? Not at all. I thought that not only were there higher priorities for this country, but that there would be dismaying consequences to victory that the administration did not appear to anticipate.

I have listed the higher priorities in previous issues. As for the consequences, no one more accurately predicted the grief that victory would bring us than James Fallows, another former *Monthly* editor, in his *Atlantic* article, "The Fifty-First State?," that just won a National Magazine Award.

In Iraq, this country is already mired in what Bush the First liked to refer to as "deep doo-doo." And liberals are entitled to say, "We told you so." But instead of wallowing in self-congratulation, we should participate in trying to figure out how to best handle the imperial responsibilities Bush II has assumed on our nation's behalf. We don't want to behave like the Republicans did when it became clear in 1994 that the Clinton health-care plan was not going to pass. Instead of joining in an effort to find a constructive compromise, they gleefully let Hillary twist slowly in the wind. We must do better this time.

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The Bookie of Virtue

William J. Bennett has made millions lecturing people on morality —and blown it on gambling.

BY JOSHUA GREEN

We should know that too much of anything, even a good thing, may prove to be our undoing...[We] need ... to set definite boundaries on our appetites.
—The Book of Virtues, *by William J. Bennett*

NO PERSON CAN BE MORE RIGHTLY credited with making morality and personal responsibility an integral part of the political debate than William J. Bennett. For more than 20 years, as a writer, speaker, government official, and political operative, Bennett has been a commanding general in the culture wars. As Ronald Reagan's chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, he was the scourge of academic permissiveness. Later, as Reagan's secretary of education, he excoriated schools and students for failing to set and meet high standards. As drug czar under George H.W. Bush, he applied a get-tough approach to drug use, arguing that individuals have a moral responsibility to own up to their addiction. Upon leaving public office, Bennett wrote *The Book of Virtues*, a compendium of parables snatched up by millions of parents and teachers across the political spectrum. Bennett's crusading ideals have been adopted by politicians of both parties, and implemented in such programs as character education classes in public schools—a testament to his impact.

But Bennett, a devout Catholic, has always been more Old Testament than New. Even many who sympathize with his concerns find his combative style haughty and unforgiving. Democrats in particular object to his partisan sermonizing, which portrays liberals as inherently less moral than conservatives, more given to excusing personal weaknesses, and unwilling to confront the vices that destroy families. During the impeachment of Bill Clinton, Bennett was among the president's most unrelenting detractors. His book, *The Death of Outrage*, decried, among other things, the public's failure to take Clinton's sins more seriously.

His relentless effort to push Americans to do good has enabled Bennett to do extremely well. His best-selling *The Book of Virtues* spawned an entire cottage industry, from children's books to merchandizing tie-ins to a PBS cartoon series. Bennett commands $50,000 per appearance on the lecture circuit and has received hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants from such conservative benefactors as the Scaife and John M. Olin foundations.

Few vices have escaped Bennett's withering scorn. He has opined on everything from drinking to "homosexual unions" to "The Ricki Lake Show" to wife-swapping. There is one, however, that has largely escaped Bennett's wrath: gambling. This is a notable omission, since on this issue morality and public policy are deeply intertwined. During Bennett's years as a public figure, casinos, once restricted to Nevada and New Jersey, have expanded to 28 states, and the number continues to grow. In Maryland, where Ben-

JOSHUA GREEN *is an editor of* The Washington Monthly. *This article originally appeared on May 2 at www.washingtonmonthly.com. On May 5, William Bennett announced, "My gambling days are over."*

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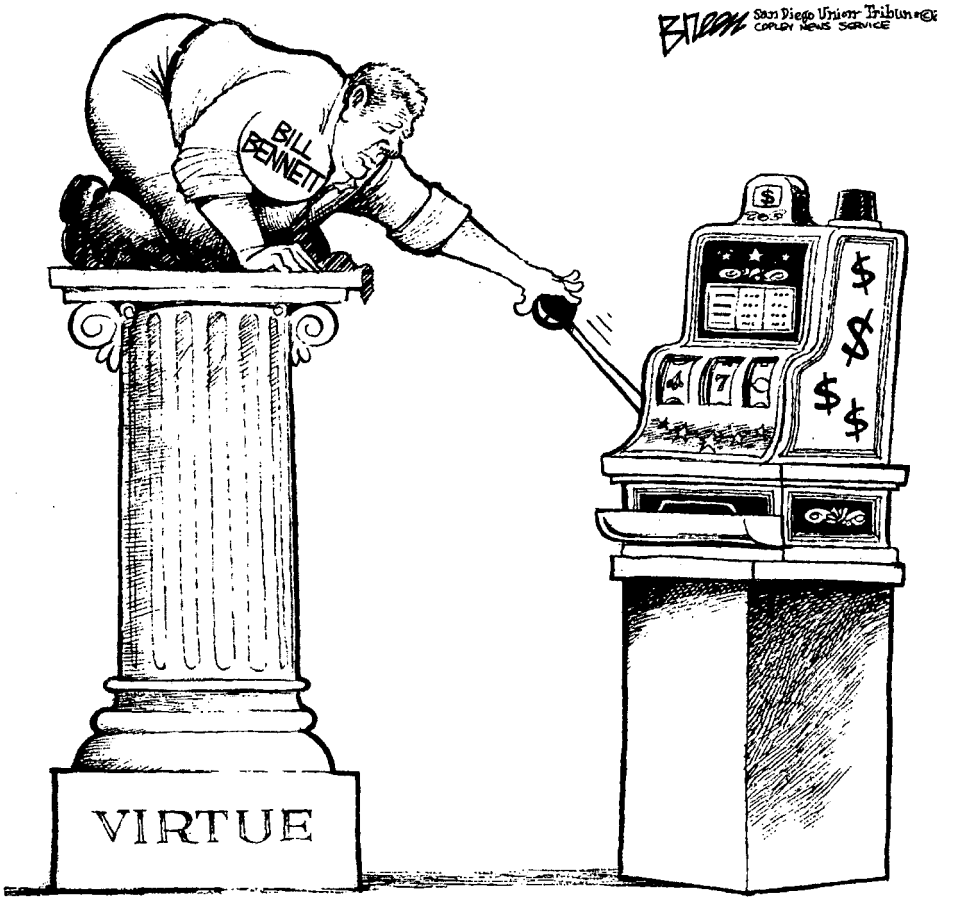
nett lives, the newly elected Republican governor Robert Ehrlich is trying to introduce slot machines to fill revenue shortfalls. As gambling spreads, so do its associated problems. Heavy gambling, like drug use, can lead to divorce, domestic violence, child abuse, and bankruptcy. According to a 1998 study commissioned by the National Gambling Impact Study Commission, residents within 50 miles of a casino are twice as likely to be classified as "problem" or "pathological" gamblers than those who live further away.



If Bennett hasn't spoken out more forcefully on an issue that would seem tailor-made for him, perhaps it's because he is himself a heavy gambler. Indeed, in recent weeks word has circulated among Washington conservatives that his wagering could be a real problem. They have reason for concern. *The Washington Monthly* and *Newsweek* have learned that over the last decade Bennett has made dozens of trips to casinos in Atlantic City and Las Vegas, where he is a "preferred customer" at several of them, and sources and documents provided to *The Washington Monthly* put his total losses at more than $8 million.

"I don't play the 'milk money.'"

Bennett has been a high-roller since at least the early 1990s. A review of one 18-month stretch of gambling showed him visiting casinos, often for two or three days at a time (and enjoying a line of credit of at least $200,000 at several of them). Bennett likes to be discreet. "He'll usually call a host and let us know when he's coming," says one source. "We can limo him in. He prefers the high-limit room, where he's less likely to be seen and where he can play the $500-a-pull slots. He usually plays very late at night or early in the morning—usually between midnight and 6 a.m." The documents show that in one two-month period, Bennett wired more than $1.4 million to cover losses. His desire for privacy is evident in his customer profile at one casino, which lists as his residence the address for Empower.org (the Web site of Empower America, the non-profit group Bennett co-chairs). Typed across the form are the words: "NO CONTACT AT RES OR BIZ!!!"

Bennett's gambling has not totally escaped public notice. In 1998, *The Washington Times* reported in a light-hearted front-page feature story that he plays low-stakes poker with a group of prominent conservatives, including Robert Bork, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, and Chief Justice William Rehnquist. A year later, the same paper reported that Bennett had been spotted at the new Mirage Resorts Bellagio casino in Las Vegas, where he was reputed to have won a $200,000 jackpot. Bennett admitted to the *Times* that he had visited the casino, but denied winning $200,000. Docu-

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ments show that, in fact, he won a $25,000 jackpot on that visit—but left the casino down $625,000.

Bennett—who gambled throughout Clinton's impeachment—has continued this pattern in subsequent years. On July 12 of last year, for instance, Bennett lost $340,000 at Caesar's Boardwalk Regency in Atlantic City. And on March 29 and 30, he lost more than $500,000 at the Bellagio in Las Vegas. "There's a term in the trade for this kind of gambler," says a casino source who has witnessed Bennett at the high-limit slots in the wee hours. "We call them losers."

Asked by *Newsweek* columnist and *Washington Monthly* contributing editor Jonathan Alter to comment on the reports, Bennett admitted that he gambles but not that he has ended up behind. "I play fairly high stakes. I adhere to the law. I don't play the 'milk money.' I don't put my family at risk, and I don't owe anyone anything." The documents offer no reason to contradict Bennett on these points. Bennett claims he's beaten the odds: "Over 10 years, I'd say I've come out pretty close to even."

"You can roll up and down a lot in one day, as we have on many occasions," Bennett explains. "You may cycle several hundred thousand dollars in an evening and net out only a few thousand."

"I've made a lot of money [in book sales, speaking fees and other business ventures] and I've won a lot of money," adds Bennett. "When I win, I usually give at least a chunk of it away [to charity]. I report everything to the IRS."

But the documents show only a few occasions when he turns in chips worth $30,000 or $40,000 at the end of an evening. Most of the time, he draws down his line of credit, often substantially. A casino source, hearing of Bennett's claim to breaking even on slots over 10 years, just laughed.

"You don't see what I walk away with," Bennett says. "They [casinos] don't want you to see it."

Explaining his approach, Bennett says: "I've been a 'machine person' [slot machines and video poker]. When I go to the tables, people talk—and they want to talk about politics. I don't want that. I do this for three hours to relax." He says he was in Las Vegas in March for dinner with the former governor of Nevada and gambled while he was there.

Bennett says he has made no secret of his gambling. "I've gambled all my life and it's never been a moral issue with me. I liked church bingo when I was growing up. I've been a poker player."

But while Bennett's poker playing and occasional Vegas jaunt are known to some Washington conservatives, his high-stakes habit comes as a surprise to many friends. "We knew he went out there [to Las Vegas] sometimes, but at that level? Wow!" said one longtime associate of Bennett.

Despite his personal appetites, Bennett and his organization, Empower America, oppose the extension of casino gambling in the states. In a recent editorial, his Empower America co-chair Jack Kemp inveighed against lawmakers who "pollute our society with a slot machine on every corner." The group recently published an *Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*, with an introduction written by Bennett, that reports 5.5 million American adults as "problem" or "pathological" gamblers. Bennett says he is neither because his habit does not disrupt his family life.

By furtively indulging in gambling—a costly vice that destroys millions of lives and families across the nation—William Bennett has profoundly undermined the credibility of his word on this moral issue.

When reminded of studies that link heavy gambling to divorce, bankruptcy, domestic abuse, and other family problems he has widely decried, Bennett compared the situation to alcohol.

"I view it as drinking," Bennett says. "If you can't handle it, don't do it."

Bennett is a wealthy man and may be able to handle losses of hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. Of course, as the nation's leading spokesman on virtue and personal responsibility, Bennett's gambling complicates his public role. Moreover, it has already exacted a cost. Like him or hate him, William Bennett is one of the few public figures with a proven ability to influence public policy by speaking out. By furtively indulging in a costly vice that destroys millions of lives and families across the nation, Bennett has profoundly undermined the credibility of his word on this moral issue.

Reporting assistance provided by Robert W. J. Fisk, Soyoung Ho, and Brent Kendall. ●

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Faux Pax Americana

The lesson from Iraq is that using fewer troops can win a war, but can't keep the peace.

BY PHILLIP CARTER

DURING THE LEAD-UP TO THE IRAQ war, hawkish Pentagon appointees like Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz predicted that the conflict could be won with as few as 50,000 troops. Meanwhile, senior generals like Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki and CENTCOM Commander Tommy Franks said that it would take at least 200,000 for the offensive and far more to police and rebuild the country after victory. For a brief week at the end of March, as U.S. troops met stiff resistance in Nasiriya and found their supply lines harassed in the south, it seemed the generals' doubts about fighting the war on the cheap might be confirmed in the worst way. Then, almost overnight, resistance collapsed. That rapid victory proved the contention that Defense Secretary Don Rumsfeld had been pressing for more than two years: that America's new high-tech, highly mobile military could win wars with far fewer troops and armor than traditional war-fighting doctrines called for—and with far fewer casualties. (At the height of the war, the United States and the United Kingdom had just 90,000 combat troops in the country.) That was a crucial test of the broader Bush administration policy of using America's military might to crush determined foes rather than simply "managing" them, as previous administrations were wont to do. If America could "preempt" future threats without overextending its military, as Iraq seemed to show, then the argument for the Bush Doctrine would be vastly strengthened.

But the hawks' gloating proved premature. The generals' argument had never been just about what forces it would take to decapitate Saddam's regime. It was also about being ready for the long, grinding challenge after the shooting stopped. By that measure they have been proven dizzyingly correct. April and May brought daily news reports from Baghdad quoting U.S. military officers saying they lacked the manpower to do their jobs. As the doubters predicted, we may have had enough troops to win the war—but not nearly enough to win the peace.

When victory arrived, we lacked the troops on the ground to prevent Baghdad—and most of the rest of the country—from collapsing into anarchy. We had tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles galore in the capital, but not nearly enough soldiers to guard such facilities as the key ministries, hospitals, and the National Museum. Ministries torched and looted during the first days are now unavailable to house the planned interim government. The plunder of hospitals set the stage for a still very possible humanitarian crisis. Looters who ransacked the National Museum stole many of the priceless historic artifacts that connected contemporary Iraq with its ancient roots, inflicting a mammoth public relations disaster upon the United States.

Things have not gotten much better over the following weeks. Lawlessness and chaos continue to reign. Women are raped, law-abiding citizens have their property stolen, those who have anything left don't go to work so they can guard what they still have. The prize the United States sacrificed so much to gain—freeing Iraq from Saddam and clearing the way for its democratic rebirth—is being squandered on the ground as ordinary Iraqis come to equate the American presence with violent lawlessness and immorality, and grasping mullahs rush into the vacuum created by our lack of

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troops. Mass grave sites, with no troops to secure them, have been unearthed by Iraqis desperate to find remnants of relatives killed by Saddam Hussein's regime, but those same Iraqis, digging quickly and roughly, may have inadvertently destroyed valuable evidence of human rights violations and crippled the ability of prosecutors to bring war criminals to justice. Perhaps worst of all, the prime objective of the entire invasion—to secure and eliminate Saddam's weapons of mass destruction capacity—has been dealt a serious blow. Even Iraq's publicly known nuclear sites had been thoroughly looted before American inspectors arrived, because, once more, not enough troops had been available to secure them. Radioactive material, perhaps enough to make several "dirty bombs," has now disappeared into anonymous Iraqi homes, perhaps awaiting purchase by terrorists. Critical records detailing the history and scope of the WMD program have themselves been looted from suspected weapons sites because too few soldiers were available to guard those places. "There aren't enough troops in the whole Army," said Col. Tim Madere, the officer overseeing the WMD effort in Iraq, in a recent interview with *Newsweek*. Farce vied with disaster when the inspectors' own headquarters were looted for lack of adequate security. Triumph on the battlefield has yielded to tragedy in the streets.

Belatedly recognizing their horrendous miscalculation, the Bush administration last month replaced the retired general in charge of Iraq's reconstruction, Jay Garner, with former diplomat L. Paul Bremer, who immediately called for 15,000 more troops to keep order. Even if he gets that many, however, Bremer will still be woefully short of the manpower he'll need to turn Iraq from anarchy to stable democracy.

The architects of the war might be forgiven for misgauging the number of troops required had the war come a dozen years ago, when the United States had little experience in modern nation-building. But over the course of the 1990s America gained some hard understanding, at no small cost. From Port-au-Prince to Mogadishu, every recent engagement taught the lesson we're now learning again in Iraq: America's high-tech, highly mobile military can scatter enemies which many times outnumber them, in ways beyond the wildest dreams of commanders just a generation ago. But it's not so easy to win the peace.

A Muscular Peace

Consider the lessons of Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. In Bosnia, America won its war with a combination of muscular diplomacy, air power, and covertly armed Bosnian-Muslim and Croat proxy armies on the ground. That mix of tools brought about the Dayton Accords in the fall of 1995. But when it came to making that treaty work, America had to send in its heaviest armor divisions, putting a Bradley fighting vehicle on nearly every street corner to enforce the peace. NATO initially sent 60,000 soldiers into Bosnia, and almost eight years after Dayton, America still has several thousand soldiers on the ground in Bosnia, as part of a 13,000-soldier NATO force. Winning hearts and minds took a backseat to overawing malcontent factions with an overwhelming and, for all intents and purposes, enduring show of force.

Like Bosnia, Kosovo was taken without any American ground commitment. There the United States won its war by unifying air power with what now-retired Gen. Wesley Clark calls "coercive diplomacy." But to win the peace America had to send in substantial ground forces. NATO quickly deployed a force of nearly 50,000 troops to the tiny province that is roughly 1/40 the size of Iraq. Truly pacifying Kosovo—a process that has really only just begun—means leeching it of its toxic ethnic hatreds and endemic violence. Most indicators hint that NATO will have to maintain its mission in Kosovo for at least a generation.

In Afghanistan, the pattern was much the same. It took only 300 U.S. special forces on foot and horseback—supported by 21st-century aircraft, GPS-guided bombs, and a force of Northern Alliance fighters—to bring down the Taliban. But once the government in Kabul had fallen, thousands of U.S. and allied troops had to come in to secure the country. Today, 15,000 American and allied soldiers remain there, 50 times more than it took to win the war.

Even the failures of these previous missions demonstrate that manpower is less important to the achievement of military victory than to coping with victory's aftermath. In Kosovo, according to retired Gen. Montgomery Meigs, then commander of the Balkan stabilization force, we were forced to "do less" because the Pentagon claimed it could not send more peacekeeping troops. As a result, says Meigs, "we were unable to run operations inside Kosovo to interdict the internal movement of arms and Albanian-Kosovar fighters to [neighboring] Macedonia." Those armed separatists set off a civil war in Macedonia—stopped only by the timely deployment of more Western troops, including Americans, into that country.

Something very similar happened in Afghanistan. Our biggest failure there occurred in the mop-up stage, following the flight of the Taliban government. Because we had so few troops on the ground, we failed

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to cut off and destroy the remnants of al Qaeda—including, most likely, Osama bin Laden himself—as they fled into the lawless mountain regions of the Afghan and Pakistani frontier. Our subsequent efforts at nation-building on the cheap have yielded similar results. Our unwillingness to put many troops on the ground has made a mockery of the president's promise for a "Marshall Plan" for Afghanistan. The Western-oriented, U.S.-installed president, Hamid Karzai, controls little more than Kabul, and the rest of the country has already drifted back into warlordism.

Shooting the Inspectors

Not only did Wolfowitz and Shinseki publicly disagree over how many troops would be needed to win the war in Iraq, they also disagreed on how many troops would be needed to win the peace. Shinseki testified to Congress that we would need "several hundred thousand" and Wolfowitz, very publicly, argued that the situation called for far fewer. What's become clear in the aftermath is that Wolfowitz simply didn't grasp, as Shinseki (who's commanded Army units in peacekeeping operations) clearly did, just what this kind of mammoth peacekeeping and nation-building operation would entail.

First, the simple question of keeping order: "It's frustrating; we do not have the personnel or the training to be policemen," Army civil affairs Maj. Jack Nales told *The Washington Post* in Baghdad. In one encounter, Nales had to explain the lack of order to civilians. "I'm sorry the police agencies and judicial system isn't [sic] here. I'm sorry we don't have enough soldiers to help you."

Second, only a few soldiers—civil affairs specialists, military police, and medical and engineering units, mostly—are specially equipped for the actual work of nation-building. The vast majority of the rest provide security for these lightly armed units. An engineering platoon of 40 soldiers might need an entire company of infantry (120 men) for security, depending on the terrain. A lack of security entails cutting the number of nation-building missions. If only three infantry companies are available, then only three missions can be undertaken at any one time—essentially the problem in Iraq today.

Third, without a secure environment, no one else can do their job. Weapons investigators are hamstrung if they are constantly getting shot at or inspecting sites whose security evaporates the moment they leave. Oil crews and aid workers don't want to be shot on the job any more than soldiers do, and security concerns have slowed progress on every project in Iraq—from opening the port at Umm Qasr to reopening the oil fields at Kirkuk.

Young Men in the Mud

In many ways, the contrast between warfighting and nation-building resembles the difference between productivity in the manufacturing and service industries. Businessmen have long known that you can rather easily substitute capital and technology for labor in manufacturing. Until very recently, however, it's been far more difficult to do so for the service industries. A similar principle applies to military affairs. In warfighting, everything ultimately comes down to sending a projectile downrange. How you send the bullet (or bomb) makes a difference—you can use an infantryman with a rifle, or a B-52 launching a cruise missile. But the effect at the far end is the same—the delivery of kinetic or explosive energy. Over the last 50 years, American strategy has made increasing use of effective technology, substituting machines for men, both to reduce casualties and to outrange our enemies.

But this trading of capital for increased efficiency breaks down in the intensely human missions of peace enforcement and nation-building. American wealth can underwrite certain aspects of those missions: schools, roads, water purification plants, electric power. But it can't substitute machines or money in the human dimension—the need to place American soldiers (or police officers) on patrol to make the peace a reality.

On the shelf of nearly every Army officer, you'll find a book by retired Col. T.R. Fehrenbach on the Korean conflict titled *This Kind of War*. At the end of World War II, confronted by the military revolution brought on by the atomic bomb, America cut its military from a wartime high of 16 million down to a few hundred thousand. Bombs and airplanes—not soldiers—would now protect America's shores and cities. After fighting as a grunt in Korea, Fehrenbach thought otherwise. Transformation was great for the Air Force and Navy, but for the Army and Marine Corps, the essential nature of warfare remained unchanged.

"You may fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it and wipe it clean of life," wrote Fehrenbach. "But if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground, the way the Roman legions did, by putting your young men into the mud." It's time Don Rumsfeld brushed up on his Fehrenbach. The book is on Gen. Shinseki's official reading list for the Army, so it's a good bet that one of his generals has a copy he can borrow. ●

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Imperialism of Neighbors

A new paradigm for the use of American power.

BY MICHAEL HIRSH

IN THE MONTHS LEADING UP TO THE INVASION of Iraq, critics of the Bush administration's policy fell into two basic camps. One group opposed war outright; the other supported confronting Saddam but disputed the administration's manner and timing. Both sides, however, agreed on one point: that it was vital to secure international backing for U.S. policy. The war itself wouldn't necessarily require lots of allied military help; most critics understood that American forces alone could probably crush the military of a country like Iraq, whose annual gross domestic product is eight times smaller than the yearly U.S. defense budget. International support was crucial not to winning the war, they argued, but to securing the peace.

On this point, the critics have been proven right. More than a month after the fall of Baghdad, Iraq remains chaotic and lawless, its citizens subject to daily criminal violence and afraid to leave their homes. This suffering could have been greatly alleviated had there been more allied troops on the ground. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld proved that he could beat Iraq's army with far fewer troops than many military experts, including some in the Pentagon, believed was necessary. But the post-war anarchy in Iraq has also proven that you can't keep the peace that way. (See "Faux Pax Americana" by Phillip Carter, on page 11.)

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The roughly 90,000 U.S. and British ground troops deployed at the height of the Iraq war were not enough to simultaneously press toward Baghdad, keep the Kurds and Turks from each other's throats, and secure the rear—let alone police Iraq's nuclear sites, ministries, hospitals, and museums. More troops have been pouring in since the fall of Baghdad, but evidently not enough to keep the peace. The consequences of Iraq's anarchy are likely to be profound, and not just because the few weapons of mass destruction that might have been there could now be spreading. A country where the state fails to keep order, allowing robbery and rape to flourish, is, after all, the dystopian version of American society that Middle Eastern dictators sell to their own people. Our failure to maintain basic law and order in Iraq has only validated one of Islamism's basic critiques of America and the societal values we want to export.

The failure to garner international support—both for the invasion and for the post-war occupation—has itself stoked resentment toward the United States among Iraqis. The administration had presumed that average Iraqis would cheer U.S. troops as liberators. But while some did, many others expressed a deep suspicion of our motives and a clear desire that we leave quickly. Though any invading force might have provoked such feelings to some extent, the Iraqis' reaction is likely harsher because U.S. troops entered without U.N. authorization and for weeks tried to keep the peace without U.N. involvement, or making use of U.N. agencies' considerable resources. The Iraqi people's reaction is natural and predictable: Having troops under cover of the international community on one's

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soil is understandably less galling and humiliating than being occupied by another country. The average Iraqi may suspect that George W. Bush wants to steal his country's oil, but would be less likely to harbor the same suspicion of Kofi Annan.

This heightening resentment could gravely endanger American policy in Iraq. After floating a number of rationales—from suspected al Qaeda links to weapons of mass destruction—the Bush administration finally settled, in the weeks prior to the invasion, on the idea that our prime war objective was to create a stable, democratic Iraq in order to set off a virtuous chain reaction in the Middle East. To those who questioned our competence in this, administration hawks pointed to postwar Japan and Germany. But those successes required massive, multi-year military occupations. To achieve something similar in Iraq would almost certainly call for a similarly lengthy engagement—and maybe even a longer one, considering the country's ethnic divisions and its lack of democratic institutions and traditions.

We are kidding ourselves if we think the United States can handle this on its own—or even that we would want to. The Bush administration must be given credit for its aggressive reassertion of American power since 9/11. But that tragedy should have also changed forever our notions of peacekeeping, nation-building, and humanitarian intervention. The 21st century is likely to present us with any number of failed states where terrorists lurk, or with tyrants who garner power by exploiting ethnic division, creating destabilizing refugee flows and genocides we cannot ignore. Either America will choose to act, or be dragged into action.

What's needed is a new paradigm for how America should use its unprecedented power—one which recognizes that, while we may be able to fight wars on our own, we can't build a stable peace on our own; and one which takes advantage both of our overwhelming military strength *and* of the legitimizing force that comes with working with allies and through the United Nations. In fact, such a paradigm already exists. It's been brewing for decades. And it's one that both the Republican and Democratic parties may be more in agreement on than you might think.

United Naysayers

A staggering amount of misinformation about the United Nations has been disseminated in recent months, starting with the notion—chiefly promoted by conservatives—that the organization is now almost as useless as the League of Nations once was. Consider the organization's role in Afghanistan. Since the war there ended in December 2001, Rumsfeld has extolled the virtues of "self-reliance" for Kabul, and how quickly Afghanistan was recovering under America's "modest footprint." Yet Afghanistan's self-reliance is largely a myth. Even as U.S. and Allied forces have failed to impose basic order in the country (thanks largely to a paucity of troops), the United Nations has been quietly keeping the country alive. During the winter of 2001-2002, it was the U.N. World Food Programme that moved food aid—much of it supplied by the United States—to hard-to-reach areas as war was still raging. To little notice or acclaim, the WFP averted a famine. It was Lakhdar Brahimi, Kofi Annan's representative for Afghanistan, who conceived and organized the December 2001 Bonn conference establishing an interim Afghan government. The United Nations provided the database for the Tokyo conference of donors to Afghanistan, held in late 2001; coordinated the return of Afghan exiles, many of them educated elites critical to the country's future; and laid the groundwork for postwar politics in Afghanistan. "What we did on the loya jirga you'll never hear about," said Julia Taft, a former State Department official—and a Republican—who now works at the U.N. Development Programme. "We designed all the requirements: getting the tent, getting the food, the food tasters, the security arrangements. How we got people to Kabul is in my mind absolutely miraculous: 1,500 people were moved in two days from all over Afghanistan, by helicopter and fixed-wing planes in our airlift. We got them there all safely and, more importantly, got them home safely. It was the biggest airlift in U.N. history. And every time we kept saying, this is really great, we really pulled this thing off, we were told, well, give the credit to the loya jirga commission, to boost their standing."

Of course, in many ways the United Nations is a mess. The grim lesson of the 1990s—of the disastrous peacekeeping missions from Somalia to Bosnia to Rwanda to Sierra Leone—is that the United Nations will never by itself have sufficient muscle for effective or aggressive peacekeeping or nation-building. But institutions like the United Nations are still invaluable—not for collective security, which they've failed at miserably—but for humanitarian aid and support, as well as infrastructure building, involving schools, hospitals, and clinics, which they're generally good at (as the Bush administration seems, partially and belatedly, to have conceded). More importantly, the U.N. Security Council can confer the kind of legitimacy on war-fighting and nation-building tasks

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that unilateralist declarations from Washington clearly cannot.

So it's time to resurrect and take seriously, at long last, one of Bush administration's own ideas: a division of labor in the world. It is an idea that the White House seems to have forgotten as it set about alienating many of America's traditional allies during its two and a half years in office, but one that deserves more currency. America must be the uberpower, overseeing global stability from the commanding heights of air and space, while others must contribute stabilizing troops, like the proposed European rapid-reaction force, in their own backyards. But to bring this harmonious order about we must rethink an even older idea, one that's almost been deemed dead in George W. Bush's Washington: multilateralism. A workable multilateralism.

Call it cooperative regional policing: a hybrid system, dependent on U.S. leadership, regional muscle and, when possible, U.N. legitimation. To work, the new system needs regional powers and organizations like NATO to do the grunt work of peacekeeping and peacemaking that the United Nations has failed at. At the same time, however, such regional forces need to be trained and pressured to act in accordance with universal or U.N. norms, and to go in, when possible, under the auspices of Security Council resolutions.

The peacekeeping and nation-building model for the future will not be collective security using U.N. forces but more often "collective approval" from New York, and with regional powers—often trained, advised, and supplied by the United States—doing the dirty work. In cases where regional powers are not available or trustworthy, U.S. civilian/military peacekeepers can step in. U.N. "blue helmets"—that is, troops under U.N. command—or even observer missions may *still* suffice in some cases. But in general the United Nations needs to become an outsourced organization, much like the modern corporation.

The "CNN Effect"

Regional policing was used to brilliant effect during the 1999 crisis in East Timor, which I regard as a model for how, in the future, American leaders, inevitably drawn into what we once considered other people's problems, can often negotiate a sensible outcome by using the institutions we built, like the United Nations. There, in that tiny, distant province of the Indonesian archipelago—about as far as you can get, literally and figuratively, from what are typically considered America's national interests—East Timorese separatists were being hacked to death with machetes by Jakarta-backed militias. People were dying by the thousands, in the full glare of the international media.

Bill Clinton, who was president at the time, wanted no part of this crisis. After six years in office, his administration was long in the tooth, tired of its crisis-a-minute pace—and not especially eager to sponsor new independence movements. Asked about the crisis at a news conference that week at the White House, the president's national security adviser, Samuel R. Berger, flippantly told reporters that he didn't "intervene" every time his daughter messed up her room at college. Berger, an avuncular, good-natured man, apologized the next day, calling his remark "an awkward way of saying we can't obviously go everywhere, do everything." But he didn't take back the point. While, behind the scenes, U.N. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke did make some efforts to resolve the conflict, Clinton and Berger were publicly avowing the kind of hard-fibered realism that would have done George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, and their ilk proud.

Then a strange thing happened. Clinton found that, no matter how hard he tried, he could not get away from East Timor. No matter which way he turned, it kept popping up in front of him, like some maddening ghost image, on TV and newspaper front pages, in reporters' persistent questions, and at the top of his discussions with other heads of state at an annual summit of Pacific Rim nations. By coincidence, just as East Timor was exploding in controversy, the president was heading to nearby Auckland, New Zealand, where he would be the leading presence at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, a relatively new forum launched by George H.W. Bush to guarantee America's role as the region's leading economic and military power. Meanwhile, on the ground in East Timor, the United Nations was in jeopardy of losing its credibility altogether after its previous peacekeeping debacles in the 1990s. Anti-separatist militias had the U.N. compound there, established to monitor a referendum on independence, under siege. The secretary general ordered an evacuation.

Like Afghanistan, Indonesia was one of those places that had fallen into Washington's lap without anyone really noticing. This exotic archipelago nation, which straddled many important shipping lanes in Asia, was near collapse thanks to the East Asian financial crisis (precipitated, at least in part, by a rapid market-opening promulgated by the free-market fervor that America had impressed on everyone after the Cold War). The Americans were still sending large-

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scale financial aid to Jakarta as a result. Perhaps worst of all for Clinton, the horrors in East Timor were getting blared all over cable and satellite worldwide, 24 hours a day, and eventually dominated the discussions at APEC (where Indonesia, of course, was present). This 24-hour TV culture—the so-called "CNN effect"—had come to be an essential element of the international community, shaping consensus and common opinions among very different countries. Jose Ramos Horta, an East Timorese underground activist, recalled for me how different this was from his early years. During the Cold War, Ramos Horta, who still sports what looks like a permanent three-day stubble, was an obscure, ragged presence who would paste bumper stickers on bathroom stalls at conferences to call attention to his people's plight. But suddenly, he recalls, it all came together for him under the glare of international media, and "the Indonesians were caught off guard." By 1999 Ramos Horta had won a Nobel Peace Prize and world recognition, and Clinton was on the spot. As Berger himself noted glumly at an Auckland press conference, a week after his clumsy remark about intervention, East Timor had "riveted the region's and the world's attention." Clinton was faced with a stark choice: to take the lead against the slaughter, or to jeopardize the credibility of the United Nations, APEC, and America's global leadership role.

So the president, at long last, acted. During a refueling stop in Hawaii en route to Auckland, Clinton announced a suspension of military assistance and sales to Indonesia. Quietly, he also pressured the IMF to withhold money. This was given the heft of international law a few days later, on Sept. 14, when he directed Holbrooke to push through U.N. Security Council Resolution 1264, which authorized a peacekeeping force, at a special late-night session of the Security Council. (China, never eager to approve violations of national sovereignty, interestingly enough approved the intervention, after getting assurances that it would happen only if the Indonesians themselves wanted it.) The Australians, meanwhile, fearing an onslaught of boat people across the Timor Sea—and perhaps coveting an inside track on the rich oil and gas deposits that East Timor would gain—volunteered a peacekeeping force. In the face of all this opprobrium marshaled by the lone superpower, Jakarta finally yielded to an Australian-led troop landing. U.S. forces were involved only at the margins, in a support role, but the mission was a notable success after years of peacekeeping failures. East Timor's transition to democracy and stability since then has been troubled; Rumsfeld, for example, has scoffed that prices are inflated in restaurants and stores in Dili because of the continued U.N. presence. But East Timor, like Bosnia, has at least stabilized and is off our radar screen for the time being.

The war on terror could easily become a strategic monstrosity if we don't develop a better strategy, and fast.

Holiday in Cambodia

Regionalizing conflicts will always be a messy solution. Australia was a rare First World country situated next door to a Third World hotspot. Other regional powers may not be as trustworthy as Canberra. And there are plenty of places where U.N.-approved regional solutions would prove impossible, or problematic at best. In some parts of the world, like East Africa and Central and South Asia, no regional actor is strong or trusted enough to do the task. This means that in select spots, Washington must pitch in. And in some places, it already has: In Afghanistan, the simmering near-state of war between India and Pakistan, and the deep mistrust of neighboring powers like Iran and Russia, cried out for a U.S.-led or U.N.-led peacekeeping effort, but none was forthcoming; fortunately, NATO decided to go out of area. In central Africa, by contrast, the regional powers are still doing battle—with each other—in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But there are potential paths out of many of these nettles, and Washington must clear them. Whereas in the past many regional players reveled in geopolitical schadenfreude over their neighbors' misfortunes—and often exploited them—today, with their national economies increasingly regionalized and globalized, few governments want to risk the economic dislocation and refugee flows that result from nearby conflict. Then, too, the sight of U.N. blue-helmets peacekeeping in their own backyards spurred many regional organizations to take more action themselves. Hence the growing strength of regional organizations across the globe, from the new African Union to the once-toothless Organization of American States, which in recent years has to preempt a war between Ecuador and Peru and helped to restore Venezuelan President

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Hugo Chavez to office after a coup.

Few of these organizations are "security" or hard-power oriented, but here the United States can help in beefing them up. America already has a military structure in place to bolster regionalization and to ensure that it works for U.S. national interests: the U.S. military's four major regional commands in East Asia, Central Asia (which includes the Mideast), Europe, and Latin America. The American brass who run these headquarters already act as virtual "proconsuls" around the world, as *The Washington Post*'s Dana Priest has noted in her book, *The Mission*. Wesley Clark, the former NATO commander who was himself such a proconsul in Europe, notes that the regional commanders have control over resources, including the ability to deploy forces or provide training: "By contrast, when an assistant secretary of state comes to the region, he flies on commercial aircraft, arrives with couple of staffers. He doesn't have a separate line on resources." In Latin America, for example, the Pentagon could easily insist that its extensive joint military exercises come under regional OAS auspices. Likewise, in Southeast Asia, Chinese participation would give the ASEAN Regional Forum, known as ARF, the muscle to take over peacekeeping in still-troubled Cambodia.

But without the imprimatur of a U.N. resolution or some other kind of multilateral authorization, most interventions by regional powers would be seen as little more than invasions. True, in some cases, legitimacy might be provided by the participation of NATO or other regional organizations. Kosovo, for instance, provides an example of successful multilateral intervention without Security Council authorization. Yet even there the United Nations came into play, at the end of the 78-day NATO bombing campaign. Milosevic had stood firmer than anyone had expected, and Clinton faced the politically nightmarish prospect of ordering a ground invasion. Washington needed Moscow, Milosevic's only remaining ally, to help persuade him to stand down. And to get Moscow on board, the United States needed the United Nations. Backed by a Security Council resolution and a U.N.-sanctioned peacekeeping force, the Russians proved crucial to Milosevic's eventual submission. NATO, the mightiest regional power in history, still needed U.N. legitimation to achieve what it wanted.

When it comes to failed states and humanitarian disasters, it's time for the neocons, Wilsonian idealists, and devotees of realpolitik to get into bed together. In practice, raw force and multilateralism go hand in glove.

Diplomacy 101

In an era of vast and growing resentment of the world's only superpower, which happily coincides with democratic leadership in most major nations, working to get U.N. legitimation also gives foreign leaders the face they need to sign onto U.S. initiatives. The role of the U.N. Security Council "is huge," says Wesley Clark, "because it enables your friends to do what you want them to do in their own domestic politics." It's true that the equalizing mythology of the United Nations and its Security Council has become harder to sustain as American power has grown; even Bill Clinton, who is now mis-remembered as a starry-eyed multilateralist, came to view the council as a stagnant pool of lost great-power ambitions, a place where a Russia or France could puff themselves up into images of their former selves. But the kind of bitter breakdown on display last February, when the United States and France flailed at each other over Iraq, need not be inevitable as long as American presidents learn the basics of Diplomacy 101 (a class in which George W. Bush apparently didn't even earn his gentleman's C). A little magnanimity would go a long way. Clinton's Balkans unilateralism, after all, also rubbed European nerves raw. But he left office wildly popular in Europe nevertheless. In every crisis, skeptics predict the breakup of the West and its institutions, and in every crisis they are wrong, for one simple reason: The only alternative is anarchy.

Even the United Nations itself has begun to acknowledge the necessity of outsourcing collective security to regional and local muscle. It has also begun to underwrite so-called "wet lease" arrangements, where contributing countries pay for their own peacekeepers (as opposed to traditional dry-lease peacekeeping, where the United Nations supplies everything). According to William Durch, one of the authors of a U.N.-sponsored critique of peacekeeping in 2000, U.N. peacekeepers are as leery of a return to the bad old days of Bosnia as American unilateralists "and are looking toward this hybrid model them-

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selves." As the United Nations seeks to downplay its own role in peacekeeping, while regional powers look to take up the slack, regionalizing peacekeeping under multilateral auspices—with America playing the role of guarantor and manager—is poised to become the system of the future.

Yet efforts at regionalization remain unformalized. The State Department is still built around bilateral rather than regional relationships. U.S. ambassadors to nations are far more powerful than their counterparts to regional organizations; within the State Department, weak desk officers run most regional policy. According to Wes Clark, the civilian U.S. government "is not structured properly to deal with the outside world. The committee structure in Congress doesn't reflect the existing division of responsibilities [in the world]. The executive branch doesn't have in it the kinds of organization required to build American security facing outward. The State Department is not just bilateral. It essentially deals with information collection and purveyance. Only in rare cases does it try to influence and act. And even when it does, it doesn't have any real mechanism to do so other than the personal charm of the ambassador. We don't have any action agency in cases where states are failing."

A wrenching record of missed opportunities has already piled up. Had Clinton recognized the possibilities of regional action earlier, for example, he might have exploited the offers from Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana, and others to send peacekeepers to Rwanda in the early stages of the 1994-95 genocide. In the end, those troops stayed home because they lacked transport and equipment. As journalist Samantha Power notes in her book *A Problem From Hell*, a small number of peacekeepers might have had a deterrent effect: "The Hutu were generally reluctant to massacre large groups of Tutsi if foreigners (armed or unarmed) were present."

When it comes to failed states and humanitarian disasters, it's time for the neocons, Wilsonian idealists, and devotees of realpolitik to get into bed together. In practice, raw force and multilateralism go hand in glove. And it's worth noting that Bush and Clinton alike pushed for more regionalization of conflict resolution. Indeed, one of the very few times Bush had something nice to say about Clinton's foreign policy was during the second presidential debate in 2000, when he praised the administration's decision to train Nigerian troops for intervention in Sierra Leone. Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security adviser, has written that humanitarian interventions "might be better carried out by regional actors, as modeled by the Australian-led intervention in East Timor. The U.S. might be able to lend financial, logistic, and intelligence support." And in June 2001, Rumsfeld authorized a study that recommended establishing "regional joint forces" that could undertake a wide variety of small-scale operations in Europe, the Middle East, or in Asia, in addition to full-scale combat. There is also something of an emerging transatlantic consensus: the French and Germans would certainly prefer to take care of their own backyard—witness the Europeanization of peacekeeping in Bosnia and Kosovo—and British diplomat Robert Cooper has called for an "imperialism of neighbors," which recognizes that for developed countries "instability in your neighborhood poses threats which no state can ignore."

In truth, regionalization is a rediscovered rather than a new idea. The "regional impulse," as scholars Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley call it, was there from the United Nations' founding moments. As early as 1943, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles proposed to supplement FDR's vision of the four great powers as global policemen with seven regional organizations. Later, Churchill proposed three regional councils, one each for Europe, the Pacific, and the Western Hemisphere, to support the planned Security Council. The U.N. Charter's long-ignored Chapter 8 also provides for the use of regional actors. But few observers have connected the dots between that section and the more commonly used Chapter 7, which dictates responses to threats to the peace. Churchill was enthusiastic about the regional councils because, as he said, "only the countries whose interests were directly affected by a dispute ... could be expected to apply themselves with sufficient vigour to secure a settlement." He was right.

We might also recall the words of one of Churchill's near-contemporaries, Walter Lippman. During the Cold War, the renowned columnist fought titanic battles against American overextension; in the late 1940s he called containment doctrine "a strategic monstrosity." Ultimately, the Vietnam War— containment's bastard child—made Lippman look prescient. In Bosnia and Kosovo under Clinton, and more boldly under George W. Bush, America seems, at long last, to have finally exorcised those ghosts of Vietnam. America has become very, very good at fighting wars efficiently and devastatingly. But we haven't yet figured out how to clean up the new quagmires of the 21st century: the postwar mess. That means the war on terror could easily become a strategic monstrosity if we don't develop a better strategy, and fast. ●

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SARS Wars

How a deadly disease is helping Chinese journalists fight Party censors.

BY TAD FALLOWS

NOWHERE IS THE EFFECT OF THE SARS epidemic more apparent than in Beijing. And nowhere in Beijing is it more strikingly evident than in the city's bustling public transportation system. When I first arrived in early April, I moved into an apartment conveniently situated along Municipal Bus Line 10. What I hadn't counted on was quite how many of my 14 million fellow residents I'd have to compete with. Thanks to an automobile tax that doubles the price of cars, public transportation literally overflows with humanity. I was nearly late to my first day of work at a Beijing news magazine, as bus after jam-packed bus rolled past my departure queue. Several days later, I wandered through some of Beijing's old Hutong neighborhoods, brimming with pride at having mastered the system well enough to get home—until three buses came and went, each so full I couldn't squeeze through the doors. Eventually, I gave in and hailed a taxi.

But all that changed after SARS. My first inkling of the coming panic came a week later when, at a World Health Organization press briefing about the situation in faraway Guandong Province, a German reporter, like the soothsayer in *Julius Caesar*, suddenly began screaming, "I thought you were doctors and not diplomats! Why don't you tell us the government is still lying about Beijing?" My fellow reporters largely ignored him. But over the next several weeks, rumors of a cover-up became more common, and as they did, the city gradually shut down. Suddenly there was no wait for a table at a popular teahouse. Then food deliveries started arriving at my office, to prevent any lunchtime exposure. Each day something else closed: schools, movie theaters, Internet cafes, barbershops, the Forbidden City. Rather than panic, people watched the energy gradually drain from the city.

For me, this process culminated one day in early May, when I descended into the Dongsi Shitiao subway station at 9:30 p.m.—and found myself completely alone. The newspaper girls had departed days earlier. And when I boarded a train, I encountered just two other passengers.

At the time, SARS had infected barely 1,500 people and caused fewer than 100 deaths in Beijing; tragic, certainly, but not enough to singlehandedly shutter a city of 14 million. What prompted the alarm was ignorance stemming directly from government censorship and misinformation. As rumors leaked out of military hospitals, it became increasingly clear that the authorities were lying. But no one had any way of gauging which information was reliable.

About a week before my solo subway trip, Communist Party leaders fired Beijing's mayor and the nation's health minister and began giving out relatively accurate infection figures. Its new policy of openness and press freedom about SARS eventually recovered some of the government's lost credibility. As a result, the crowds started returning to the streets. For the first time in a month, I had to share a bench on the subway.

China's handling of SARS has sparked an interesting debate among Western observers. Optimists, such as the authors of a recent *Economist* cover story on China, believe the episode heralds a new openness that they compare to the great change in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. Pessimists counter that, in fact, SARS provides yet another excuse for the Communist Party to clamp down, as it has done by quarantining large numbers of people. From my vantage point as a reporter for one of China's leading independent magazines, I believe both sides misunderstand the nature of Chinese censorship, and with it, the likely impact of SARS. While widespread censorship still obtains, the situation here is not nearly so clear-cut—and there is reason for cautious optimism.

Free Ice Cubes

When SARS was first making news in Guangdong and Hong Kong, *Caijing Magazine*, where I work, was vir-

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tually the only publication outside the affected provinces to cover it. The rest of the Beijing press was waiting for the government to declare its position. As soon as the party decided on a policy of transparency, China was deluged with coverage—so much so that my magazine switched from a biweekly to a weekly schedule to keep up. As recent headlines attest, even state-run media are being allowed to cover SARS openly and accurately. "SARS Situation Remains Severe," blared the May 2 headline of the state-controlled *Beijing Today*, which went on to report that "a shortage of beds in designated hospitals is preventing full-scale and timely quarantine of suspect patients." An editorial in the government-run *China Daily* stated bluntly, "China should attach more importance to its public health care system, the weaknesses of which were highlighted by the [disease's] outbreak." My editor pointed out to me a series of investigative reports in the *China Youth Daily* from within the SARS wards, and a candid interview on state-run television in which Beijing's acting mayor expressed deep concerns about the future, as examples of the kind of journalism that hadn't existed in China just a month before.

But the reason that Chinese censorship is so difficult to understand is that it isn't applied uniformly, and leads to striking disparities. *Caijing*, for example, has built its reputation exposing corporate scandals, such as fraudulent accounting. These stories often anger their subjects, but never aroused government censors until we reported on the banking system last year. China's banks are closely controlled by the central government, which forces them to extend loans to insolvent state-owned enterprises, leading to staggering rates of non-performing loans. Terrified of exposure, the government reacted swiftly to our investigation of a bank in Guangdong Province, forcing the magazine to recall every copy and remove the story from its Web site.

Press freedom in China, then, should not be viewed diametrically—rising or falling like the level of water in a glass depending on government policy—but rather as more resembling an ice cube tray, where a great deal of freedom on one topic can exist alongside grave restrictions on another. This helps explain why press scrutiny of corporate mismanagement is largely permitted, but discussion of weaknesses in the banking system is not. Welcome as the freedom to report on SARS has been, such striking openness is not as unusual as it might at first appear. Nor, alas, will it necessarily trigger the spiral of ever-growing transparency that optimists predict.

Ping Pong Shots

SARS does, however, represent a genuine opening of the kind that China's fledgling independent media are adept at exploiting. One reporter at my magazine described the ideal story as a ping-pong shot that just catches the edge of the table. *Caijing*'s most popular tactic for pushing the bounds of any grant of journalistic freedom is to couch political and social criticisms—highly taboo subjects—in terms of economic reform. In late 2000, one major story managed to detail a host of illegal practices, from insider trading to price-fixing, among China's large investment funds. (Unlike banks, the stock market is a relatively unimportant source of capital, not as fundamental to economic stability, and hence permitted much more honest coverage.) The next year, another story documenting nearly $100 million in fraudulent profits led to the collapse of a major corporation and the arrest of its president. Both articles carried broad political implications, given the subjects' high-level government ties. But *Caijing* avoided censorship by presenting both as purely financial stories. It's perhaps no surprise, then, that Wang Shuo, a colleague at *Caijing*, says that for Chinese journalists, "the most important survival skill is knowing how to deal with the government."

The SARS story has provided an opportunity to employ the same deft touch. We recently published a feature recounting the debate within Chinese scientific and governmental circles about whether SARS was caused by a coronavirus or a rare form of airborne chlamydia. It was impossible to read the article without noticing how often bureaucrats had suppressed research and how much energy officials had put into advancing their pet theory about chlamydia, despite the protests of doctors and absent meaningful scientific evidence. Or take my recent work, on the success of American, Canadian, and Singaporean public health systems in controlling SARS. The government would no doubt object to an editorial arguing that China should copy America's public-health and disaster-relief institutions. But readers surely got the same message from these "news" stories.

The newfound freedom on SARS contrasts sharply with the ongoing censorship of other topics, from the Tiananmen Square massacre of 14 years ago to the persecution of the Falun Gong sect to Taiwanese and Tibetan sovereignty. And the government could, of course, end its policy of openness on SARS at any time—though they'd pay a huge price both domestically and among crucial foreign investors. But until that happens, SARS presents an important opportunity. Having learned from the Tiananmen crackdown that rapid political change is not viable, China's reformist journalists have adopted the path of step-by-step liberalization. Viewed within this framework, the SARS story may indeed represent an historic step forward—or, as my editor put it to me, "the greatest opportunity for opening the press" since 1989. ●

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Star Search

A million federal jobs are about to open up for young Americans. Will the government lure the best—or the rest?

BY NICHOLAS THOMPSON

JOINT DIRECT ATTACK MUNITIONS, OR JDAMs, are a marvel of economy and engineering. Strap the $20,000 electronics kit onto the tail of a standard-issue dumb bomb, and you've created a deadly precision weapon that can be guided to its target by GPS satellites orbiting hundreds of miles above. The first generation of JDAMs are vastly cheaper than laser-guided missiles—price tag: $250,000 to $1 million apiece—yet are even more accurate than most of the munitions used during the first Gulf War. In this spring's campaign, JDAMs allowed U.S. warplanes to obliterate Iraq's armed forces with little risk to our pilots and troops and a minimum of collateral damage, moving Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to assert that the technology had given U.S. bombs "a degree of precision that no one ever dreamt of in a prior conflict." By the time Saddam's government collapsed last April, JDAMs—like stealth fighters, the Patriot missile, and the 14th-century English longbow—had achieved weapons superstardom, treated to glowing profiles in *Newsweek* and *Slate* and pictured as lovingly as any supermodel.

But JDAMs weren't the brainchild of crack scientists toiling in some defense contractor's generously funded skunk works. The person most responsible for their development was a 57-year-old Department of Defense program manager named Terry Little. Several years ago, Little was charged with coming up with finding a contractor and a contract to create something that could make dumb bombs smart. He didn't want to go through the normal Department of Defense procedures: After eight years in the Air Force and nearly two decades in the Pentagon, he'd seen dozens of projects end up over budget and underperforming. So when it came time to develop JDAMs, he set about doing things differently. Instead of demanding that contractors meet highly specific and technical requirements, Little, realizing that prices would drop if he just told potential contractors what the department needed in plain language, was able to call for a rebidding on the main JDAM contract, and see the competing companies come up with their own innovations, the price dropping by nearly half.

The modest Little refuses to take much credit: "Most of the real work was done by other people. I just had a vision and a willingness to do battle with the system." Others think him too humble. "It's really this one guy, Terry Little, who's responsible," says Steve Kelman, who ran the Office of Federal Procurement at Bill Clinton's Office of Management and Budget.

Smart bombs, it turns out, require smart bureaucrats. But federal workers like Little are a vanishing breed. "There are lots of DOD contracts that run into big trouble," Kelman points out, "and one of the main reasons is that there aren't enough good people coming in." For years, Little didn't have anyone learning at his feet. Because of budget restrictions and lack of forethought at the highest levels of the Pentagon, he wasn't allowed to hire a single person between the time he joined the JDAM project in 1993 and the time he left in 2001 to head over to the Missile Defense Agency. By 2001, in fact, he didn't have anyone under age 30 on his 70-person team.

This problem exists all over government. For most of the past decade, the federal government, its hands tied by a hiring freeze, has done a terrible job of recruiting highly talented young people—and it's paying the price. The federal civil service now employs more people in their 60s than in their 20s and, in five years, half of the civil service (including Little) will be eligible to retire. In short, the federal government is now at a recruiting zero hour.

But as Little points out, the current situation is "both

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a challenge and an opportunity."

If the government does a good job of bringing in people, it could transform the relationship between itself and the taxpayers who support it, at a time when it plays a more important role in people's lives than at any point in a generation. If the government does a bad job, that, too, will transform the relationship between the government and taxpayers—by making it dramatically worse.

Fortunately, a few agencies have recognized the problem and are actively working to fix it. The General Accounting Office, for example, has developed a terrific record of recruiting and retaining, and other agencies, including the Department of Defense, have started working to lower some of the bureaucratic obstacles to effective hiring currently written into law. But these pioneers will need to teach the rest of the government a few lessons it seems reluctant to learn.

Talent Show

Three big problems make it hard for the federal government to attract top talent. One is that very few people are aware of government jobs that match their skills and goals. Another is that those people who do learn about and apply for such jobs are forced through a Byzantine and demoralizing application process. And finally, those who do get hired are often herded into stultifying grunt work and saddled with a pay and promotion system that seems created for 1950s clerks—which it actually was.

To get people in the front door, you must first actively recruit them. That's why most corporations scour college campuses looking for bright young people and are always on the lookout for talent they can steal from their rivals. But very few people know that there are jobs available or how to get them. Aside from the armed forces, federal agencies make little effort to educate the public. (Everyone has seen ads for the Marines—but have you ever seen one for the Department of Education?) And the public isn't well educated about what's out there. According to a poll by the Partnership for Public Service in October 2002, most Americans say that they know vastly less about jobs in the federal government than jobs in the private sector.

Like a lot of problems in the public and private sector, of course, this one begins—at least in part—at the top. The last five men to win the presidency have all run against the bureaucracy, trashing government instead of telling people about all the opportunities available there. Ronald Reagan stacked his administration with anti-government radicals and even cut off recruiting for many social programs. VISTA, the urban social-work program, had to go without promotional posters for five years of the Reagan era. George H. W. Bush was hardly better, nor was Bill Clinton. Running against the civil service helped Clinton earn his New Democrat bona fides; when he talked about the civil service, he spent most of his time telling people about the jobs he'd cut, not the great ones they could get. (Like his predecessors, Clinton was praising the civil service by the time he left office, but with less vigor than he'd attacked it when he entered.) George W. Bush has pushed useful reforms, including exempting the Department of Homeland Security from many of the rules that make it harder to recruit top talent—and is trying to do with the same thing for the Pentagon right now. But he has also been harshly critical of the civil service and, despite his current popularity, has not rallied Americans even to join the military.

Moreover, given the frequent civil-service hiring freezes of the past two decades, current employees tend to covet available promotions and are eager to funnel col-

Art by Amy Hayes

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leagues into the few openings that exist. For those inclined, it's easy to make sure their friends find out about jobs first and help them through the necessary hoops. And many are indeed so disposed: According to a 2002 Merit Systems Protection Board report, 62 percent of unionized federal employees believe that their organizations should promote internal candidates before even considering outsiders. Partly as a result, only half of all federal job openings are open to candidates from outside the government.

It doesn't help that advantages which have attracted generations of people to government work—stability and benefits—are less of a draw to today's young workers. When asked what they want most out of their jobs, people in their 20s rank "opportunity to develop skills" first and "opportunity for promotion" second, well ahead of "benefits" or "job security." Those who gravitate toward public work are frequently not the country's brightest, which brings employee quality down—and helps keep it there. Bad or bored bureaucrats on the inside drive away people on the outside; top talent leaves or never comes, while low talent comes and never leaves.

The numbers are daunting: Only about one in six college students expresses any interest at all in the civil service. Worse, the percentage of students graduating from top public policy graduate schools and going on to work for the government has dropped by a third in the last two and a half decades. Only about one in four winners of United States Truman Scholarships—awards given to promising undergraduates aiming for public-service careers—goes on to full-time work in the civil service, even though the program tracks most of them into federal government internships after college. "Sometimes students see people who go and work for the government as fuddy-duddy bureaucrats not bright enough to work elsewhere," says Nadinne Cruz, the director of the Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford University.

Maybe the most discouraging statistic comes from Paul Light at the Brookings Institution. According to one 2002 survey, the number of people in the government who say that they come in to work solely for the paycheck exceeds those who say the government gives them the opportunity to accomplish something worthwhile—a chilling insight into both the culture of government work and the kind of people who stay in. According to that same study, 70 percent of Americans believe that federal employees are motivated primarily by job security.

The Outsiders

Those still interested in government service and able to learn about job openings must still surmount a few more hurdles. Many eager applicants, for example, can't decipher federal job descriptions, which often seem written in a code intelligible only to government employees and, consequently, their friends.

It is instructive to compare public and private job applications. Let's say you want to work at Southwest Airlines in customer service. Your first step is the Web site which directs you to Southwest's "People Department." There you find the image of a smiling woman right next to a link called "luv your job." Click on the link and you get a list of bullet-points explaining what talents you'll need, such as "excellent communication skills" and "typing ability or keyboard skills." There follows a clear, simple list of the steps to apply and a list of reasons to do so, including "FREE UNLIMITED space available travel anywhere Southwest Airlines flies!"

Now let's say you want to apply for a job in customer service at HUD. You click on the jobs link and get the following warning: "You have requested a document that is external to HUD's World Wide Web site. HUD cannot attest to the accuracy of information provided by linked sites." That's startling and confusing enough, but if you bother to click to the next page you'll be faced by a complicated form asking your location and status, including whether you are "a current Federal employee in an excepted service position covered by an interchange agreement."

If you're intrepid enough to ignore that gobbledygook and press forward, you'll eventually reach the page with the actual job listings. Click on the "customer service representative" tag and you get to yet another page with a barrage of technical information. After searching for a minute, you will probably find the next magic button: "View announcement for PO-DEU-2003-0007ABZ." Bingo! You're finally at the job description.

And even here, the description is pretty impenetrable. It includes "Promotion Potential: GS-07," a phrase unfamiliar to those unfamiliar with government classifications and the system which places almost all employees on a scale from GS-1 (entry-level clerks without high-school degrees) to GS-15 (experienced managers). The job description begins, "The incumbent is the first point of contact for HUD's customers and the Department, and will function as the generalist who is generally knowledgeable of HUD services."

Even those aspiring to be generally knowledgeable generalists still have to convince HUD that they meet the job requirements. Where Southwest asks for "excellent communication skills," HUD asks for "Ability to communicate orally with others in person and over the phone," and then requires backup in the form of "separate narrative statements describing how their experience satisfies each Quality Ranking Factor (QRF)/Knowl-

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edge, Skill Ability (KSA) by describing: 1) where or how the particular KSA was acquired, 2) where and how the particular KSA was used."

You then have to muck through 1,992 words on veterans' preferences, special advantages to displaced federal workers applying under the "Career Transition Assistance Program/Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP)/(ICTAP)," and the following useful tidbit: "Giving your social security number is voluntary. However, we cannot process your application without it." At long last, you find where to send your application. If you have stuck it out that long, you too may have a chance to become PO-DEU-2003-0007ABZ—assuming you still want to.

The Gordian Knot

But job applications are just the first tedious part of the process. Before hiring anyone, agencies require approval from their personnel departments, which in turn cannot go beyond congressional appropriations. If the agency does get approval, its supervisors must write a position description, get the vacancy announcement out (wherever "out" means), rate the applicants, make doubly sure that they haven't passed over any veterans, interview the candidates, get higher-level approval for the hire, and then complete the required background checks; each step typically taking between two and four weeks. Candidates for the Senior Executive Service (SES)—the top layer of career appointees, who are above GS-15s—must pass muster by yet another review board, composed of SES members. Not surprisingly, the process usually entails huge backlogs. The Defense Security Service, for example, revealed in 2001 that it had 440,000 people awaiting security clearance. The most basic clearances can take several months, and clearances for the most senior positions take, on average, more than a year. If long delays don't sap an applicant's enthusiasm, background checks often do: Many people are scared to apply to the IRS, for example, because all hires face a thorough back audit and scrutiny—a stressful experience even for those who do pay their taxes. Overall, it takes an average of about three months for the government to hire anyone, an untenable delay for many applicants—especially younger job-seekers. Seventy percent of college students say that they are unwilling to wait more than four weeks for an offer.

Why is the hiring process so complex? The chief culprit is a set of rules several thousand pages long, which politicians generally find much easier to add to than subtract from. Some of them date back to 1883, two years after a disappointed patronage seeker shot President Garfield—an event that helped to spur the creation of the modern civil service system. But since regulations are easier to add than to remove, Congress has repeatedly solved minor issues by stacking new layers of regulations on top of old. "Federal recruiting has always been a mystery wrapped in an enigma, or, actually, a mystery wrapped in detailed rules. And, like so much of what the government does, the rules are always a good idea to start with but then you add them all together and you have got quite a hurdle," says Robert Knisely, a veteran of seven different cabinet agencies.

Everyone knows how hard the rules make it to fire incompetent bureaucrats. But they also make it hard to hire competent ones. For example, the government has extremely complicated rules on hiring veterans, with different points and restrictions added depending on when and where they served. The official handbook on the subject is three times as long as this article and includes such provisions as awarding 10 points to the scored application of the mothers of a deceased veteran who "died under honorable conditions while on active duty during a war or during the period April 28, 1952, through July 1, 1955, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign medal has been authorized." That rule may make sense; some of the eligible mothers suffered substantially because their sons fought for the country. But making personnel officers keep up with a 15,000-word rulebook of veterans' preferences—not to mention scores of other rules, regulations, and stipulations—is not a recipe for speedy or soundly based selection.

The events and aftermath of September 11 illustrated in the most dramatic fashion possible how vital it is to have talented civil servants.

Calling Alexander the Great

That's not to say that civil services rules are irretrievably Procrustean. It is important to insulate the bureaucracy from the worst political pressures—no one wants an Office of Management and Budget producing reports that simply rationalize current administration policies—and it would be a sad day when political appointees could fire civil service employees on a whim. But while the rules do largely keep politics out of the civil service, they also tend to keep out the best young talent.

One solution would be to hire half the civil service on two- or three-year renewable contracts. Then it would

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not be necessary to put poor performers through the exhaustive dismissal process—at a cost of $100k+ for junior grade employees. Their superiors could simply decline to renew them. This would create some knowledge gaps and reduce the incentive to apply for people focused on job security. But it would dramatically increase the number of openings for top young talent while increasing the incentives for high performance. People focused on job security, who may not be the most ambitious applicants in the first place, could apply for the permanent, but usually less rewarding and closely scrutinized, positions.

But even without such major overhauls, the rules are still decidedly too complicated and the people who should have a real incentive to untangle them seem uninterested. Cabinet members have the most at stake, but the average such officer stays for about two years, the first six months of which she spends trying to locate the cafeteria and figuring out whom she can trust. Then, in the next year and a half, she has to focus on making an impact and setting her legacy—and every minute spent recruiting talent is a minute that's not going to get her on C-SPAN or in for lunch with the president. Nor does Congress possess any real incentive for reform. Indeed, few constituents are pressuring members for action on that front. There are probably more chicory-grower activists. When I called the press office of a senator who has led Hill debate on the issue, the person who answered the phone asked "Why are you calling? I mean, nobody from the media calls about this."

The only people with real stakes in civil service reform are government employee unions, and their principal stake is stasis. A reform that brings new people in more quickly can threaten the folks already inside. At the very least, it disrupts a system that they have learned how to play. Moreover, public employees don't have the same incentives to bring in top talent as their private-sector counterparts. In the private sector, more talent increases the odds that everyone will get rich and decreases the chance of bankruptcy. But government employees will have the same jobs, and the same paychecks, no matter how good their colleagues are.

Pay Me or Play Me?

One obvious corrective to government's hiring woes would simply be to raise pay levels. But it isn't as important, or as unambiguously useful, to raise salaries as one might think. For one thing, federal salaries are already pretty generous: The average executive-branch employee earns more than $54,000 a year, and "average" embraces many very low-level jobs. The average librarian working for the United States government makes $65,000; the average astronomer comes in at around $100,000. In Washington, D.C., because a high proportion of senior bureaucrats work there and because of special bonuses granted to people in areas with high living costs, the average salary exceeds $70,000. Moreover, government jobs offer pretty good benefits, including the opportunity to buy into the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan, the largest plan in the nation. One might not get the concierge service formerly available at Enron, but government isn't particularly likely to collapse and take employee pensions with it, either.

Still, in several areas, such as computer technology, the government could no doubt attract better talent by raising wages. But since it can't afford to raise salaries across the board, it should take two intermediate steps. First, the government could expand student-loan repayment programs, which agencies can legally offer but rarely do. This would get extra money to the young people who need it most. Second, it should pay bonuses to high performers, raising the incentives for ambitious young people who know that they will do well wherever they go to work.

A practice known as "pay banding" has had some success in the Defense Department. Under this system, salaries are allowed to fluctuate within several broad bands—instead of being locked into rigid increments based primarily on length of tenure. Jacques Gansler, Clinton's undersecretary for acquisition technology and logistics, created an optional pay-banding system, potentially creating incentives for defense-acquisition employees to work harder and for hard workers to come in. These reforms got a boost from successful demonstration programs at the Navy's China Lake and San Diego weapons labs, where for 20 years the Navy has assigned employees into broad pay bands, instead of the rigid GS system—allowing salaries to fluctuate much more than in the rest of government where civil-service rules fix raises and promotions at very specific levels, a reform that has yielded significant increases in worker quality and only a 3 percent increase in overall salary costs.

Still, Gansler left with the Clinton administration, and only a small percentage of eligible employees have enrolled in the program he created. That's the overall government trend. Currently, inflation and location bonuses account for more than 80 percent of all pay adjustments in the federal government—which may make everyone a little bit happy, but it doesn't help to bring in and retain stars. A recent Partnership for Public Service poll showed that, by a ratio of 4-to-1, managers working in the federal government believe that the private sector does a better job than their own system at rewarding outstanding employees.

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Show Me The Work

Not even student-loan repayments and merit bonuses would be remotely as much of a draw as giving bright young recruits useful work. The White House and the Congress offer young people terrific mobility and opportunity—and that's where they usually go. (The same, of course, is true in the private sector, where a 28-year-old can become general manager of the Red Sox and a kid out of college can launch a multi-million-dollar software firm.) But within the federal bureaucracy, climbing is slow. Only about 1 percent of the people who make it into the SES are under 40 years old. And even they are stuck under a layer of political appointees.

More importantly, young people have the sense that one can get trapped by government work. A recent Partnership for Public Service poll found that, by a greater-than-30-to-1 ratio, recent college graduates believe that the private sector is better than the government in allowing employees to take initiative. Young government employees often come to the same conclusion. Carlos Cruz-Abrams, for example, is a University of Virginia law graduate who joined the INS two years ago under a special recruitment program but is now jumping ship to head into private law. For him, as with most of his other departing young colleagues, money didn't matter nearly as much as opportunity and novel work, which he didn't get even though he entered on one of the INS's fastest tracks. "I don't want to be doing the same thing in 20 years," he says.

Tellingly, retention rates for Presidential Management Interns—talented recruits brought in through special hiring authorities and allowed to rotate through different agencies—match retention rates for regular government employees for their first three years, after which the program's success collapses, largely because the participants don't see adequate opportunities for advancement. Shihka Bhatnagar, a former intern now at the Department of Commerce, knows that she will leave in a year—not for more money, but because she wants to run something big, rather than crawl up into a GS-15 spot only to continue toiling under a revolving cast of political appointees. "When I'm 50, I want to be in control of what I'm doing," says Bhatnagar.

One way to give such clear-minded purposeful people that chance would be to create a job resembling that of a permanent undersecretary in Britain's civil service, a top-ranking official who moves up through the civil service to a position directing an entire department. Beneath him are a series of deputy undersecretaries, who have significantly more power than members of the SES, which is the highest formally organized civil-service cadre in the United States. Unfortunately, there has been little movement here to create a comparable system—perhaps because it's the political appointees who make most of the rules.

Ask What You Can Do For Your Country

Government also has to convince young people that doing federal work really matters. Under both Franklin Delano Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy, young people were inspired to come to Washington; following Kennedy's famous speech imploring Americans to "ask not what your country can do for you," federal government job applications doubled. "It was exciting to work for the United States government in the 1960s. We walked to the office each morning alive with the sense that we had important business to attend to," wrote former Peace Corps official and *Washington Monthly* founder Charles Peters in his autobiography, *Tilting at Windmills*.

A more recent success story is that of Colin Powell at the State Department. Like Kennedy, Powell had both star power and an interest in attracting talent. When he took office, the department was spending a paltry $70,000 a year on recruitment; today State sponsors a flashy ad campaign urging people to join "the front lines of diplomacy." Powell's State Department has also become the most aggressive federal agency when it comes to offering to help repay student loans. These efforts have brought results: During Powell's first year on the job, the number of people who signed up to take the Foreign Service exam nearly doubled, and it has climbed since.

Even agencies not traditionally viewed as sexy—and which are not run by international superstars—can transform themselves. Case in point: The Government Accounting Office. Fourteen years ago, this magazine lambasted the GAO as a "one-eyed watchdog," running errands for Congress and publishing half-baked exposés that "went for the capillaries." But now, the GAO is one of the hottest recruiters on public-policy graduate school campuses across the country. Last year the ratio of applications to the number of job offers was about 8 to 1, more or less the same as MIT's undergraduate admissions. "They do the best job by far," says Alexandra Bennett, the assistant career director at Syracuse's Maxwell School.

The GAO also gets the details right. It writes clearer job descriptions than those of most other government agencies; and its promotional materials appeal to young men and women's patriotism and sense of service: Those who join up, the GAO's promotional materials explain, will work to "ensure the accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the AMERICAN PEOPLE." (The boring label "General Accounting Office" never appears on flyers—just "GAO.")

Unlike most agencies, the GAO recognizes that many young people today want to move around in their work:

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Every new employee moves to at least three projects in his first two years. "They throw you in headfirst," says Chad Davenport, a new hire. Davenport, a 1994 Duke graduate, says that if he tells someone at a bar where he works, they generally don't know what it is, "but they think it's interesting when you tell them what you really do." Staffers have fun, too. This fall, the GAO printed up paperwork for a fake university in England called the Y'Hica Institute for the Visual Arts and wangled $55,000 of grants from the Department of Education. (One of the fictitious grant applicants was named Susan M. Collins—after the Maine senator who had requested that the GAO look for holes in its student-loan programs.)

Vote Barney Bureaucrat!

Among other things, September 11 illustrated in the most dramatic fashion possible how important it is to have talented civil servants. The INS could have prevented the terrorists from even entering the country. The CIA and the FBI might have found them while here. The FAA could have stopped them from getting on the planes. And the Department of Treasury could have tracked their finances much more effectively.

Government offers no specific product by which it can be judged. People know whom to credit when Microsoft puts out a better word processor or when Ford builds a more efficient and sleeker car. But government's accomplishments are often more diffuse—who thanks Fannie Mae for the availability of low-cost home mortgages?—while its failures get far more press than its successes.

But as the GAO and others have shown, good hiring generates a positive feedback loop. Talented recruits improve an agency, and better agencies attract more talented recruits. If the rest of the government can apply that lesson as it faces the approaching wave of retirement, public administration could be transformed and regain some of its old mystique.

Three years ago, the current president—the son of a former president and the grandson of a senator—ran as an outsider, emphasizing his non-Washington roots and playing up what can only be called a mediocre career as a private businessman. We'll know that government has truly transformed itself when that pattern reverses—when people exaggerate their connections to it, rather than their distance. Perhaps one day we'll have candidates who have started their careers in the GAO or the State Department, and who make that their campaign centerpiece.

Or maybe one day there'll be a candidate who has begun his career in local government and then moved to a top federal job—Assistant Secretary of the Navy, for instance. Perhaps he later becomes governor of a big state like New York, then goes on to run for president by emphasizing his inside mastery of the system. And maybe there will be enough latent trust in government to elect him once, twice, or even four times. Then—who knows?—he might do great things with and for government. ●

The Washington Monthly's Monthly Journalism Award

ERIC HOOVER, BROCK READ, MICHAEL ARNONE, BURTON BOLLAG, RICHARD MONASTERSKY, DAVID L. WHEELER, LILA GUTERMAN, ANNE MARIE BORREGO & THOMAS BARTLETT

"Closing the Gates"

The Chronicle of Higher Education, April 11, 2003

Living in constant fear of arrest and possible deportation is not a common experience for most American residents. Since Operation Liberty Shield, however, it is one that is increasingly--and alarmingly--common in academia. In a special report on the impact of homeland security on higher education, a team of reporters from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reveals how the government has irreparably changed the fabric of academic life. Through a wide-ranging series of interviews and investigative pieces, the authors demonstrate how Operation Liberty Shield is having a detrimental effect on education: Research projects have been stalled because the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (which succeeded the INS) is not granting the necessary visas for scholars; Middle Eastern students are continually being harassed; and librarians and academic advisers now have no choice but to act as data monitors for the federal government. As a result, the ability of American colleges and universities to participate in the international exchange of ideas and information is slipping away.

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com. Nominations for stories run in May 2003 are due June 5, 2003.

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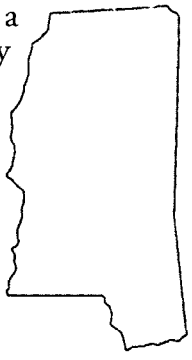
Tidbits & Outrages

Turning water into beer

In a laudable example that should be emulated by governments worldwide, Poland's consumer protection agency has targeted purveyors of watered-down beer. The agency's director claims that three-quarters of beer served in Poland's famous beer gardens is watered down and "not worth buying."

Class act

Former RNC chairman and current Mississippi gubernatorial candidate Haley Barbour made memorable pitch for Head Start on a recent campaign swing. "Head Start is a godsend for Mississippi," said Barbour, a church deacon and Sunday school teacher. "Some of those kids in it would be better off sitting up on a piano bench at a whorehouse than where they are now." A spokesman later insisted Barbour "meant no disrespect."

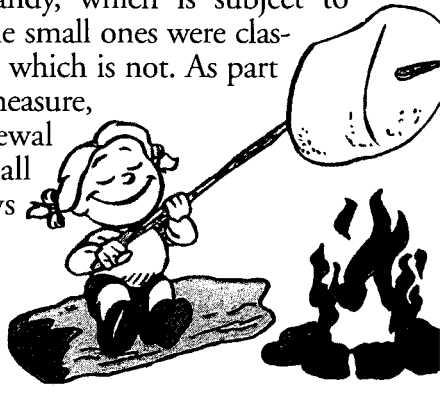


Sweet revenge

Five Georgia state legislators have filed a bill that would make it a crime not to serve sweet tea in any restaurant that serves iced tea. The misdemeanor could carry a sentence of up to a year in jail. One of the lawmakers hit upon the idea after he was unable to order sweet tea in a Chicago restaurant.

Stay-Puff tax exemption

Perhaps states' budget woes aren't so bad. Despite nationwide revenue shortfalls, New York has extended a tax exemption for large (but not small) marshmallows. Until five years ago, large marshmallows were considered candy, which is subject to sales tax, while small ones were classified as food, which is not. As part of a 1998 measure, up for renewal this year, all marshmallows won equal treatment under the law.



Live long and prosper ...

Officials in a Portland, Ore., mental-health clinic have rescinded a help-wanted ad for a counselor who speaks Klingon—the language of an alien race in "Star Trek." A county official explained, "It was a mistake, and a result of an overzealous attempt to ensure that our safety net systems can respond to all customers and clients."

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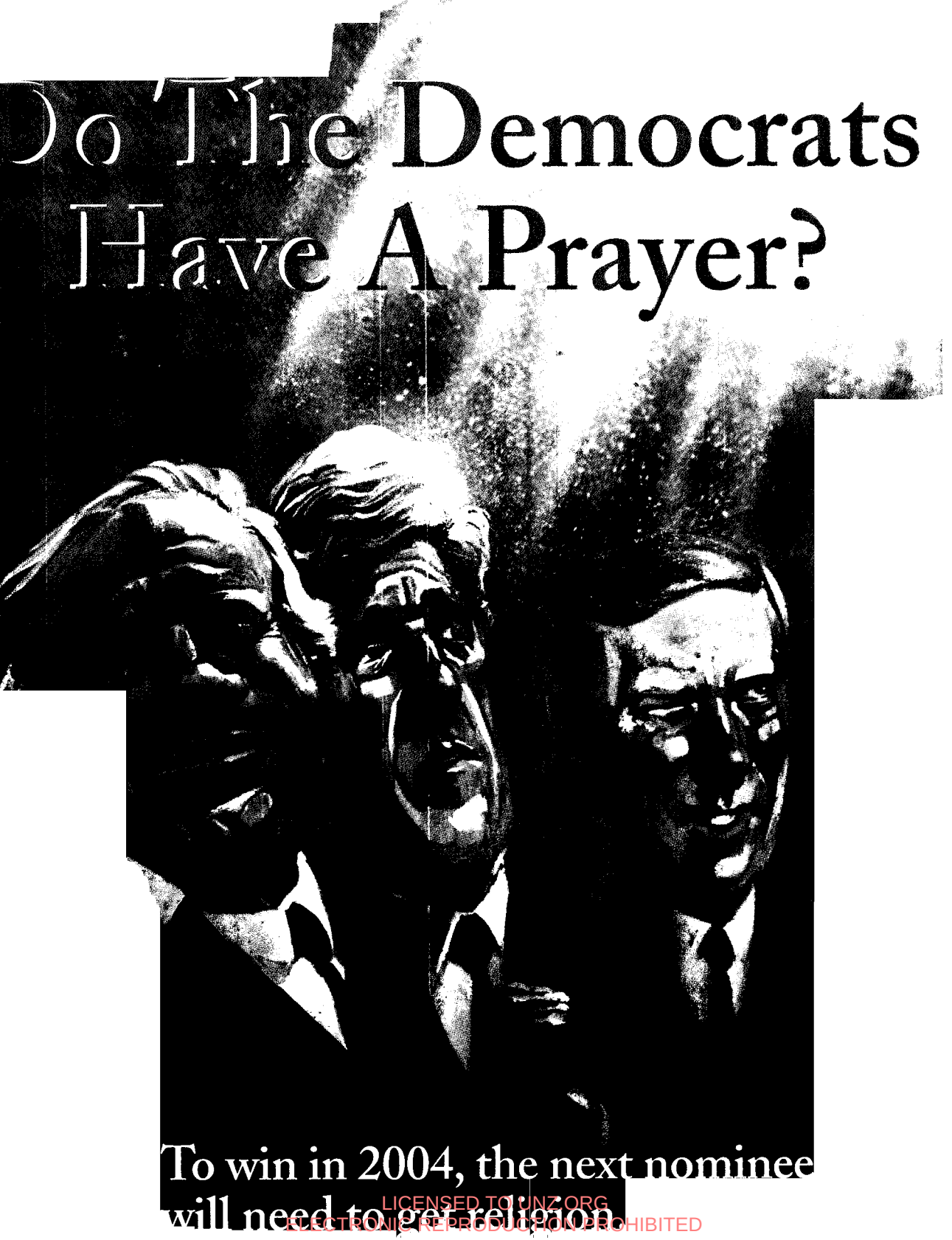
Do The Democrats Have A Prayer?



To win in 2004, the next nominee will need to get religion

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When President George W. Bush spoke of the "wonder-working power" of Americans in his 2003 State of the Union address, many television viewers may have considered it simply a nice rhetorical turn of phrase, an eloquent way of describing the potential social impact of volunteerism, which holds great appeal to a wide swath of American voters. Millions of evangelical listeners, however, knew better. They were already humming along to the rest of the chorus of an old gospel hymn that speaks of changing the world through divine, not human, intervention: "There is ... wonder-working power in the blood of the lamb."

The speech was, in many ways, a microcosm of the Bush administration's more global strategy for appealing to religious constituencies. "Wonder-working power" was a kind of code that slid under the radar of many listeners and commentators, but was immediately recognized by the target audience of evangelical Christians.

For Bush and his political guru Karl Rove understand something very important about the religious vote. The President has solidified his standing among highly committed evangelicals, who, though originally wary of his conservative credentials, have been rewarded with the appointment of such religious conservatives as John Ashcroft to top administration jobs as well as through grants distributed under the faith-based initiative. But Bush has maxed out his support with conservative evangelicals; 84 percent voted for him in the 2000 election. To win reelection, he will need to hold onto the votes of another group which supported him in 2000: religious moderates—one of the least-appreciated swing constituencies in the country, and one whose allegiance is more up for grabs than most people realize. They include Muslims, most Catholics, and a growing number of suburban evangelicals, all of whom are devout, but many of whom are uncomfortable with Bush's ties to the religious right, whose agenda—from banning abortion to converting Muslims—is deeply disconcerting to them. Many of these "swing faithful" have also begun to wonder if Bush's rhetoric of compassion and justice will be matched by policy substance.

They could be courted by the right kind of Democrat—one who, like Bush, can speak the language of faith sincerely. Yet those who hope to challenge Bush in 2004 have uttered scarcely a word about religion—or how faith informs their stances on issues such as health care and the environment—during any campaign event so far, including the first primary debate last month in South Carolina. In part, this is because Democratic voters are so multicultural that candidates fear they may alienate some part of their base, especially religious minorities, if they invoke faith in any way whatsoever. Moreover, organized religious groups aren't very active in Democratic primaries. Candidates feel little pressure to speak to the concerns of faith communities, while they do feel compelled to address the issues of secular groups, like the ACLU. But it is telling that Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, the only Democratic nominees to have won the White House since 1964, both went out of their way to discuss issues of faith and to speak before congregations early during their respective campaigns. Whereas Republicans seem almost obligated to campaign with Jesus as their running mate during the primary season, Democratic candidates today feel they must keep a lid on religious talk in order to win.

There's John Kerry, who argues that his identity as a Catholic has no bearing on his role as a politician, although he will now happily discuss his Jewish ancestry. There's Dick Gephardt, who, though a Southern Baptist by faith, grew up in a German-American community south of St. Louis, among

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Catholics and Lutherans who considered public discussion of religion prideful. His sole reference to religion thus far in the campaign is a single-phrase allusion, tucked at the end of his announcement speech, to the church scholarship he used to attend college. Joseph Lieberman's faith—which made some Democratic stategists nervous during the 2000 elections—makes him arguably more viable in a general election than most commentators understand, but even he has toned down his religious rhetoric, assuring the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in April that his support for President Bush's faith-based initiative was balanced by his liberal views on issues such as gay rights and abortion. And finally there's John Edwards, a Clinton-like candidate whose Baptist background and Southern roots both foster open expressions of faith, but who still told a questioner in Iowa, "I haven't talked about it, because I only usually talk about it when asked." Nearly all of them seem to be taking their cues not from Carter or Clinton, but rather from Al Gore, who kept mum on religion after his early campaign reference to the evangelical catchphrase "What Would Jesus Do?" earned him ridicule from the mainstream press.

Today, conventional wisdom holds that the best way to predict a person's party affiliation is to ask how often they go to church. As political commentator Michael Barone has noted, "Americans increasingly vote as they pray, or don't pray." But unfortunately, Democrats seem to have absorbed the wrong two lessons from this trend—that they will never win support from religious Americans, and that in order to retain their core base of secularists and religious minorities, the party should avoid the topic of religion altogether.

They are wrong on both counts—and the mistake could cost them not only the 2004 election, but also any chance of building a sustainable electoral coalition. Learning to speak to and appeal to religious constituencies is not simply a matter of political calculation, but a quality Americans demand from their leaders. Even people who aren't terribly religious know moral vision when they see it—agnostic liberals tear up when they see video clips of Martin Luther King Jr. holding forth on the National Mall—and they respond to faith when it's sincere and tied to a politics in which they believe. A president who can talk about his personal faith and explain how it connects to his policy initiatives enjoys both the tactical advantage of attracting the "swing faithful" and the moral stature to excite and inspire all those, religious or not, who are already predisposed to support him on the issues. To become America's majority party again, the Democrats will have to get religion.

Preacher Comforts

While much of official Washington worships at the altar of Sunday political talk shows, the rest of the nation has the highest rate of church attendance of any industrialized country. Eighty-seven percent of Americans say that religion is important in their life, according to a 2002 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life poll. And voters believe the value of faith extends beyond their personal lives. Seventy percent said that they want the president to be a person of faith in a 2000 survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. While the percentage is higher for Republicans, fully 67 percent of New Democrats agree that it is important for a president to have strong religious beliefs.

In part, this is a simple matter of self-identification: Voters who are churchgoers prefer a president who is, too. Yet, historically Americans have preferred their manifestations of presidential religion in generic form, most famously reflected by President Eisenhower's remark that "America makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith—and I don't care what it is." But that doesn't make the preference any less deeply felt. After all, Americans have good practical reasons for preferring their president be a person of faith. Presidents must make momentous, life-and-death decisions while in office, and people want that person to have something bucking him up other than his pollster—something he or she can turn to for guidance and strength. It reassures us to know that our leaders feel the pull of a greater interest.

Voters naturally interpret professed faith as an indication that a candidate at least thinks about the morality of things and tries to make decisions based upon a cause or power higher than himself. According to a 2000 survey by the nonpartisan research group Public Agenda, of those who want religion to become more influential in public life, three-quarters don't care which religion it is, only that it's sincere. Deborah Wadsworth, the organization's president, says, "Americans see religion as a unique course capable of righting the ship on its wrong moral course."

Despite the claims of the highly vocal religious right, this sort of religious moral vision isn't the exclusive province of the GOP. In fact, the most

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religious presidents of the past 30 years were Democrats: Carter and Clinton. Both were able to avoid the fates of religiously bland Democratic nominees—including George McGovern and Walter Mondale, each the son of a minister. And both defeated Republican opponents who had either loose religious ties or, at the very least, an aversion to discussing religion publicly. Although the two Southern governors shared other characteristics that worked to their political advantage, their facility with religious language certainly contributed to their success. In his anthology of great speeches, *Lend Me Your Ears*, William Safire, for instance, selected as Clinton's oratorical triumph an address to a Memphis church that was essentially an extemporaneous sermon. The Southern Baptist cadences, almost more than the words themselves, gave the speech its power—"We *will* honor the life and the work of Martin Luther King. We *will* honor the meaning of our church. We *will*, somehow, by God's grace, we *will* turn this around." And while Carter's presidency is today remembered as a failure, in 1976, his candidacy—that of a devout born-again Christian with strong ties to the civil rights establishment, taking on a Republican party tarnished by Watergate—was heady and exciting. Many Democrats remember Carter's famous promise to the American people—"I'll never lie to you"—as hokey or embarrassing, but it did help to evict Gerald Ford from the White House.

Recently, however, Republicans have tried to claim the moral high ground. Campaigning in the wake of the Monica Lewinsky scandal that alienated many moderate religious voters, Bush promised, over and over again, to "restore honor and dignity to the White House"—an appeal that proved devastatingly effective. As with Carter, Bush's pledge carried weight with voters because his own faith gave him the moral and religious authority to make such words resonate.

If you have any doubt that it is still possible to charge up a Democratic-leaning audience with religiously tinged rhetoric, listen to the sermons at some liberal churches. When the Rt. Rev. John Chane, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, took to the pulpit this March, his sermon sounded like a blueprint for the sort of religiously minded critique of the Bush administration that Democrats might want to study. Imploring parishioners to take seriously their baptismal vows to "strive for justice" in the world, Bishop Chane raised the example of the Bush administration budget and found it wanting. "We are embarking on a draconian program of social welfare," he declared, highlighting cuts in services to protect the poor, the sick, and the young. "This is not at all what Jesus Christ meant when he said, 'Suffer the little children.'" At the end of the sermon, the congregation spontaneously burst into applause in a very un-Episcopalian response to the bishop's political call to arms.

If only the Democrats could frame their critiques in such religious and resonant language, they, too, could connect with a constituency motivated by politics as well as faith.

Religious moderates represent one of the least appreciated swing constituencies in the country. They could be courted by the right kind of Democrat, one who, like Bush, can speak the language of faith sincerely.

Swing Votes, Sweet Chariot

Democrats stand to gain the most support among two particular religious constituencies—"freestyle evangelicals" and "convertible Catholics." Although some commentators often refer to the "evangelical vote" or the "Catholic vote," more astute political observers understand that both of these religious communities are actually a collection of sub-groups characterized by regional, socio-economic, ethnic, and sometimes theological differences. And their political attitudes and behaviors are far from monolithic. "There are sub-constituencies among the religious of America who are more persuadable," says Shaun Casey, professor of Christian ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary. "What Karl Rove has seen is that if the Bush campaign can go into traditional Democratic constituencies and peel off 5 percent of the vote, that is a huge victory." Democrats could do the same thing if they understood the territory better.

Who are these religious swing voters? Freestyle

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evangelicals—so named by Beliefnet.com founder Steven Waldman and political scientist John Green—are a growing subset of the largest religious community in the United States. Twenty-five percent of American adults are evangelical Christians, but 40 percent of those (or 10 percent of the adult population) are freestyle evangelicals. This group is tied not to controversial figures such as Pat Robertson or Jerry Falwell, but to shared cultural touchstones like the *Left Behind* book series or Michael W. Smith concerts. Sociologist Alan Wolfe refers to the "maturation of American evangelicals" as an indication of the changing demographics of the community. They are just as likely to send their children to public schools as the next person, and many throw back beers on a Saturday night just as happily as they attend church the next morning—often at so-called "megachurches," which have expanded rapidly in the suburbs, reflecting the spread of evangelicalism up the rungs of the socio-economic ladder and into the mainstream.

Although theologically conservative, this group is politically independent; freestyle evangelicals supported Clinton in 1996 and Bush in 2000. They are fairly conservative on social issues—most are pro-life, although they are not single-issue abortion voters—and express particular concern about popular culture. "They worry a lot about their kids, about declining standards, about what they see as 'smut' on television," says Green. "But they have a much broader agenda—they are interested in social welfare issues, they care about the environment." These voters supported Tipper Gore's successful campaign for music warning labels in the 1980s, and like many parents shared Lieberman's worries about the omnipresence of explicit television shows, movies, and Internet sites. Yet in the 2000 campaign, the Gore-Lieberman team inexplicably ignored these touchstone issues.

Free-style evangelicals are not the only "persuadable" religious voters. Conservative older Catholics (read: pre-Vatican II) are a dwindling group, and a potential coalition of "convertible Catholics" is taking their place. On a range of issues, especially economic issues, these Catholics are natural Democrats: They tend to have urban ethnic roots, support unions, and don't automatically hate "big government." But as religiously minded voters, they also feel alienated from the Democratic party over a range of moral and cultural issues, including abortion. In the 1980s, many of them who had once voted Democratic left the ticket to vote for the Gipper, hence the term "Reagan Democrats." But they were never fully at home in the GOP either. Clinton brought many Catholics back into the fold with initiatives like the V-Chip and mandatory school uniforms. But in 2000, Bush campaigned hard for their votes. He pursued a strategy similar to the one used to court evangelicals, granting one-on-one interviews with conservative Catholic publications like *Crisis* magazine and cultivating key alliances with conservative Catholic intellectuals. His aggressive courtship won back many Catholic voters. In 2000, both Bush and Gore drew 20 percent of their total support from Catholics, a relative gain for the GOP.

Because presidents must make life-and-death decisions while in office, people want that person to have something bucking him up other than his pollster—something he or she can turn to for guidance and strength.

Over the long term, though, winning the Catholic vote will depend on winning the Hispanic vote. The vast majority of Hispanics are Catholic, but they tend to be culturally Catholic, not necessarily committed churchgoers. In part because of their loose ties to local churches, this group has been extremely difficult to mobilize. In 2000 and 2002, Hispanic Catholics had the lowest turnout rates of any of the religious voting blocs. But when they do vote, they overwhelmingly support Democrats. Although white Catholics divided their votes between Clinton and Dole, Latino Catholics voted for Clinton by a wide margin. A survey by the Hispanic Churches in American Public Life project found that, in 1996, Hispanic voters supported Clinton at a higher rate (81 percent) than did any other ethnic group, including blacks. As Green observes, "There is a huge potential there, not only because they're growing as a group, but because there is an untapped set of votes there." If Democrats could get Hispanic Catholics excited about the next election, they could pick up a great number of votes.

Muslim Americans are yet another religious vot-

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ing bloc that could be swayed. During the 2000 campaign, Muslims were actively courted by the Republican ticket and responded with broad support for Bush. Bush was endorsed by the American Muslim Political Coordinating Council PAC, which cited, among other things, his outreach to the community. What limited post-election poll results exist suggest that Bush did extremely well among Muslims in 2000, especially in the critical state of Florida. But although conservative strategist Grover Norquist told *Forward* magazine that Muslims are more simply comfortable with Republicans "because the Democratic Party is aggressively secular and does not like people of faith," there is now a great deal of Muslim grassroots ambivalence (to put it mildly) toward the Bush administration. While the President's rhetoric regarding Islam has been calming and inclusive, the actions of his administration have outraged many in the Muslim community, who now fear being held up for questions before boarding airplanes and worry that relatives entering the country will be detained by the INS. Many are also irked that Bush has not directly—and by name—criticized Franklin Graham, the pastor who swore him into office, when Graham called Islam a "very evil and wicked religion." What the Democrats need to do is call Bush on these affronts and convince Muslim voters that their party isn't hostile to people of faith. Although their numbers are small overall (between 3 and 7 million nationally, a hotly debated question), with the tight margins in recent elections, Muslim Americans can clearly form an important electoral bloc, particularly in a key swing state like Michigan.

Democrats are a coalition party when it comes to religion, much as they are when it comes to race, ethnicity, and class. Gore voters in 2000 were an amalgam of FDR Catholics, marginalized mainline Protestants, secularists, religious African Americans, Jews, some Muslims, and all other minority religious groups except Mormons. "Democrats worry about talking about religion in a way that endorses a particular faith or offends anyone," says one senior Democratic congressional aide. "So they've just decided not to talk about religion around other people, and that's hurting them." Nearly every Democrat I spoke to expressed concern that if Democrats focus on religion, they will alienate some portion of their base. But, in fact, 80 percent of Gore's support in 2000 came from religiously committed voters. While Democratic voters may distrust the religious right, they don't dislike religion itself.

Holy Ghost in the Machine

In order to attract the support of the faithful, Democrats need a candidate and staffers who understand their mindset and can speak their language. Unfortunately, the silence of Democratic presidential candidates on religious matters is matched by the cluelessness of the party apparatus. The Democratic National Committee has voter outreach desks that, according to the DNC Web site, "serve the Democratic Party by increasing political participation among all segments of the Democratic Community." There are outreach efforts to the old and the young, ethnic groups, veterans, members of the military, women, and the disabled community, but none to religious Americans of any faith. While the Democratic electorate is fairly religious, professional Democrats—the party operatives and Hill staff in Washington—are generally unfamiliar with, and sometimes even quite antagonistic to, religion. As *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne observes, "The core problem for liberals is the extent to which they are viewed as arrogant and distant from the understanding of ordinary people. Their attitude toward faith is to look down their noses."

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Although many elected Democrats are religious, their staffs generally are not. I know of several liberal Catholic senators who have, at one time or another, replaced experienced senior advisors with junior members of their staff who were personally religious, because those aides were able to understand the tension the senators faced on certain social issues like abortion. Likewise, President Clinton recruited Terry Edmonds, a devout African-American, to lead his speechwriting shop in part because he recognized that no one else there was familiar with the type of religious allusion and phrasing required for many audiences. But this example of promoting a religiously minded staffer to reach out to religiously minded voters is not widely followed. In many ways, Edmonds is the exception, not the rule. Too often, Democrats simply ignore religious individuals altogether.

God and Spam

When it comes to appealing to religious Americans, a party needs more than just rhetoric. It needs policies that draw on the values shared by many religious communities. Fortunately, the Democrats already have plenty of these. They just have yet to make the connection. In April, if you drove through almost any town in America, you would have read anti-war messages, not just in newspaper articles about Democrat "doves," but also on the reader boards in front of many churches. Today three of the Democratic primary candidates, Lieberman, Kerry, and Gephardt, are proposing economic incentives for manufacturers to improve automobile fuel efficiency, advancing concerns similar to those of the Evangelical Environmental Movement, which last year launched the "What Would Jesus Drive?" campaign urging people to "discover new ways to love your neighbor as we strive together to reduce fuel consumption and pollution from the cars, trucks, and SUVs we drive." Recently, the leaders of some environmental groups, whose members tend to lean Democratic, have recognized they share much common ground with religious communities. Carl Pope, the executive director of the Sierra Club, for example, issued an apology that "the environmental movement for the past quarter of a century has made no more profound error than to misunderstand the mission of religion and the churches in preserving the Creation." There are any number of other issues, from fighting offensive spam email to expanding national service, that have a moral component, are important to voters, and that a Democrat with sincere religious convictions could profitably champion.

What if Democrats stopped playing defense on religion—or, more accurately, started playing at all? They could gain political traction with religious moderates by pointing out the true nature of Bush's strategy on religion: Talk from the center, but govern from the right. For instance, while religious moderates cheered Bush's initiative to give social-service grants to faith-based organizations, many were turned off when one of the first large grants went to an organization run by Pat Robertson, who is considered a charlatan even by most evangelicals. If Democrats were less ignorant of America's religious landscape, they would know they could criticize Bush's attachment to Robertson without offending the swing faithful by appearing anti-religious.

Moreover, an authentically religious Democrat would have the moral standing to criticize the "bait and switch" aspect of other Bush policy pledges, on issues from AIDS prevention to hydrogen-powered cars. In his 2003 State of the Union address, Bush appeared to be reaching out to swing voters with compassionate-sounding new initiatives. But in reality, almost none of the "new money" in Bush's pledge to combat AIDS in Africa was slated for appropriation before 2006-2008—by which time many of the 21 million Africans expected to contract AIDS by 2010 will already be infected. Likewise, his announcement of a $1.2 billion program to develop a hydrogen-powered car turns out to be a boondoggle, plying automakers with public money without any requirement that they actually produce a working result. Criticisms of Bush's doubletalk will resonate because they're part of a larger pattern. At the same time that Bush talks about extending the ability of faith-based organizations to provide social services, his budget slashes funds for those same services.

If Gore had reached out to religious communities in 2000 and succeeded in peeling off even a small percentage of the evangelical votes that Clinton won in 1992 and 1996, he could have overcome the margin by which he lost states like West Virginia, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Florida. Disaffected evangelical and Catholic moderates could find a natural home in the Democratic Party, which shares their values of social justice, concern for the earth, and economic equality. They're not looking for a tent revival at the Democratic Convention. They're just looking for a little respect. ●

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Body Count

How John Ashcroft's inflated terrorism statistics undermine the war on terrorism.

BY ALEXANDER GOUREVITCH

AT FIRST BLUSH, NEW JERSEY'S District Attorney's office seems like a model of federal law enforcement in the war against terrorism. In the year after 9/11, after all, they nabbed 62 individuals for acts of "international terrorism"—individuals who, arguably, would no longer be threatening American lives. But on closer inspection, there's less to this success story than meets the eye. Sixty of the 62 international terrorists, according to a March story in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, turned out to be Middle Eastern students who had cheated on a test; specifically, they had paid others to take an English proficiency exam required for college or graduate school. Only one of the other two cases involved charges that might normally be understood as relating to an act of terrorism: Ahmad Omar Saeed Sheikh, who was indicted for his role in the kidnapping and murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan.

With the exception of Pearl's kidnapping conspirator, in other words, none of the terrorists in question were actually terrorists. And these aren't isolated examples. Under post-9/11 rules promulgated by the Justice Department—which created a number of new terrorism-related categories by which to classify cases, but left it to district attorneys to determine which crimes fit the bill—federal prosecutors across the country are turning in creative anti-terrorism records to their superiors in Washington, who are under enormous pressure to produce results and have little incentive to double-check them. The result is an epidemic of phony reporting. According to a January report by the General Accounting Office, at least 46 percent of all terrorism-related convictions for FY 2002 were misclassified; of those cases listed as "international terrorism," at least 75 percent didn't fit the bill.

If it were just a matter of wasting a few million dollars, the shenanigans at Justice might be just another example of typical Washington game-playing. But it's far more consequential than that. In any bureaucracy, reliable statistics are an important feedback; for our anti-terrorism efforts, reliable statistics are a matter of life and death. Without them, it's impossible for policymakers and the public to guess how many terrorists are operating within the United States, how many of them we've caught, which of our anti-terrorism strategies are effective—and which are useless. But like Robert McNamara's generals, who inflated enemy body counts so politicians could claim the Vietnam War was going better than it actually was, federal prosecutors are giving us a false sense of security. "You have to have numbers if you are going to manage anything," says William Wechsler, a former director for transnational threats at the National Security Council who helped shut down al Qaeda's finances after 9/11. "If you're not effectively measuring what's going on, then you might miss something that you should have caught," says Wechsler. "And you might have people that are abusing authority because they are driven to push up the only measure that matters: convictions related to terrorism."

Status Symbol Statistics

For decades, bureaucrats in Washington have utilized the trick of tweaking statistics, reclassifying what they were already doing into whatever Congress is

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eager to fund at a particular moment. The war on terrorism is no different. For many federal law enforcement agencies, especially the FBI, anti-terrorism operations helped justify their budgets at a time when older threats to domestic security, like organized crime and communist espionage, were on the decline. And thanks to an expansive, non-standardized, and often subjective definition of the term "terrorism," it's easy to make mundane criminal cases look like terrorist threats. When two *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporters studied Department of Justice cases between 1996 and 2001, they found numerous misclassifications. Among those counted as terrorist cases were a tenant impersonating an FBI agent to try and escape eviction by his landlord, a commercial pilot who falsely implicated his copilot in a hijack plot out of personal jealousy, and seven Chinese sailors who stole a Taiwanese fishing boat to seek political asylum in Guam. (Not to mention the Arizona man who got drunk on a United Airlines flight, kept ringing the call button, and "put his hands on a flight attendant," according to the article—and was classified in Justice's records as a case of "domestic terrorism.") As Jonathan Turley, a professor of constitutional criminal procedure at George Washington University Law School, told the *Inquirer*, Justice, like all agencies, needs to "justify past appropriations and secure future increases." Bagging more terrorists, even if they probably just need a few A.A. sessions, is a good way to do it.

The same scheme can be found in other departments, too. Two months before 9/11, for instance, Andrew Bacevich, a professor of international relations at Boston University, wrote in *Foreign Policy* that the State Department's 2001 Patterns of Global Terrorism report "not only exaggerates and distorts reality but also obscures the political context in which specific episodes of terrorism actually occur." Bacevich, who describes himself as a conservative, points out that 170 of 200 "anti-U.S." attacks the report labels "terrorism" were bombings of a U.S.-owned oil pipeline in Colombia. "When I looked at the report and peeled back the surface of what constituted a statistic, killed, property, etc., [it] just didn't seem to justify the rhetoric of alarm," says Bacevich. This year's Patterns showed 156 fewer international terrorism incidents in 2002—practically all of them a decline in Colombian pipeline bombings. Yet after the report was released, Cofer Black, the State Department's counterterrorism coordinator, cited the decline as evidence that "Al Qaeda is under extreme stress" because "their numbers have been whittled down tremendously."

There's no doubt law enforcement is putting more effort into anti-terror work; prior to 2001, the government had never prosecuted more than 100 cases of terrorism and internal security per year, while in 2002, they prosecuted 1,208, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), a non-profit based at Syracuse University. It's just not clear how many terrorists the feds are actually catching. Some "terrorism" cases have been little more than hoaxes, like people sending their friends envelopes full of sugar during the anthrax scare. In western North Carolina, one group of 66 terrorists were actually 66 illegal immigrants working at Charlotte/Douglas International Airport, who pled guilty to misusing visas, permits, and social security numbers. For their crimes, the workers got about a month in jail, a small fine, and were then released to immigration officers. Not surprisingly, in the four years prior to 9/11, that same district had never had a terrorism prosecution or conviction. Indeed, as of mid-November 2002, the federal government had arrested about 800 airport workers nationwide in "Operation Tarmac," but not a single one was alleged to have any link to terrorism, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. One assistant U.S. attorney in Salt Lake City even resigned his post because he thought the sweeps were targeting the wrong people.

The same pattern is repeating itself across the country. As reporters for the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* discovered, the U.S. Department of Justice's western Pennsylvania district office reported as a terrorist conviction one woman who sent a fake anthrax letter to her husband as a Halloween joke, a former art student who forgot about a utility knife in his carry-on bag—he was sentenced to two months and then allowed to return home to Lebanon—and an Egyptian man who spent 22 days in jail for sarcastically telling an Amtrak station agent he had a bomb in his bag. And in Indiana, according to the *Indianapolis Star*, the 10 terrorism-related cases prosecuted by federal authorities in that state comprised "four anthrax hoaxes and a bogus terror threat; a Pakistani couple who altered a passport; two Moroccans who did not notify immigration officials of address changes; and a Kuwaiti drifter who tried to pass $11 million in bad checks at a bank."

Al Capone People

One source of this inflation is simply a continued lack of oversight and management, as the GAO noted in its January report. Even after 9/11, when Justice tripled the number of terrorism-related classifica-

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tions, verifying the integrity of each district's statistics remained the personal responsibility of each U.S. attorney or district division chief. The lack of double-checking by a single office back in Washington makes it easy for career-conscious regional officers to willfully manipulate their data. "Some of it is inflated because of the political goals of the people compiling statistics in that office," says Jonathan Winer, a former senior State Department specialist in financial crimes and terrorism. "U.S. attorneys are politicians, they are not bureaucrats or judges."

The result is to blur the line between terrorists and common criminals. Operation Green Quest, a federal task force designed to disrupt terrorist financing networks, recently announced a variety of nationwide arrests. However, as the *Minneapolis City Pages* reported, none of the individuals arrested were actually charged with a terrorism-related crime. Rather, they have been indicted on run-of-the-mill fraud and laundering charges. Indeed, the largest number of anti-terror prosecutions have been in cases of identity theft or immigration violations, and in the last year, the majority of Justice's terrorism cases have come to prosecutors not from the FBI but from the Social Security Administration and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (recently moved to the new Department of Homeland Security), reversing the historical trend in which about two-thirds of cases came through the FBI. When John Ashcroft noted in his March testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee that his department's 9/11 investigations had led to the deportation of 478 individuals, he didn't mention that most were guilty of visa violations. (And we know that nearly all of those repatriated weren't terrorists, because the FBI must affirmatively clear someone of being a terrorism suspect before deporting him.)

There are, to be sure, occasions when it makes sense to include ordinary criminal convictions in terrorism statistics. "One of the decisions post 9/11 was to Al Capone people," says terror expert Matthew Levitt of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy—that is, prosecute someone on lesser charges (Capone got an 11-year prison term for tax evasion) when evidence for a more serious crime is significant but not sufficient for a conviction. But whereas federal prosecutors had good reason to believe Capone was a mobster, there's little evidence that the immigrants, hoaxsters, or common criminals Justice nabs are actually terrorists. Indeed, the government's own numbers prove it. According to TRAC, the federal records clearinghouse, the median prison term for terrorism-related convictions in FY 2002 was a mere two months. By comparison, the median for the past four years has fluctuated between 17 and 32 months. If the government really thought it was catching lots of dangerous terrorists, it's unlikely those people would be getting such short sentences. "They are not letting terrorists go after two months," notes Winer. "If they were, it would be a heck of a lot worse than anything that Michael Dukakis was accused of in the Massachusetts furlough case." For all the new powers the Bush administration has demanded that Congress give federal law enforcement, they don't seem to be a lot better at catching real terrorists.

That said, there's nothing wrong with prosecuting money-launderers, identity thieves, and immigration cheats. Classifying them as terrorists, however, is foolish—and undermines the war on terrorism in two ways. First, it diverts resources and attention away from efforts that might genuinely make it harder for terrorists to plan and execute attacks in the United States. Hazardous materials teams, notes Gary Hart, co-chair of the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century, are chronically short of equipment and training— "they are underfunded and ignored." Nine months were "wasted with the so-called Office of Homeland Security," he points out, while more important problems like coordinating communications systems and gathering human intelligence were neglected. Without knowing what works and what doesn't, no institution can learn from its mistakes.

More importantly, inaccurate statistics allow policymakers to believe they're making more headway on a problem than they really are. It took the 9/11 attacks to put the threat of terrorism on Washington's front burner. But over time, painting an overly rosy picture of the war on terrorism saps political will to fight it, and distracts lawmakers' attention from flaws that haven't been addressed. As Wechsler notes, "you're not effective if you can't quantify the inputs and the outputs of your process. Any CEO in America will tell you this. The irony is that this is an administration made up of CEOs, and yet you still have these major issues in the law enforcement community." Inflating terrorism statistics, then, isn't just a bureaucratic misdemeanor. It's a deliberate sabotage of our anti-terrorism efforts—and over time, one that puts American lives at risk. The war on terror, unlike the war in Vietnam, is one we cannot avoid. But if we continue to make the same mistake that Robert McNamara's generals did, it will be one that, like Vietnam, we'll lose. ●

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In Contempt of Courtship

Why we love to watch other people date, but hate to do it ourselves.

BY ELIZABETH AUSTIN

MONICA LEWINSKY HAS A NEW JOB: doling out her sage dating advice as host of a new Fox TV "reality" show, "Mr. Personality." In the show, a babelicious young stockbroker named Hayley is asked to choose a lover from a group of 20 masked suitors. The masks, we're told, are used to conceal the men's looks and force Hayley to base her decision on personality alone—a concept that assumes a lady never glances below her date's chin. Unlike Ms. Lewinsky (described in the show's promotional materials only as a psych major-turned-handbag designer who "currently lives in New York City and is considering a future career in law") Fox execs limited their pool of eligible suitors to unmarried men who do not live on Pennsylvania Avenue.

As host, Ms. Lewinsky functions as Hayley's on-site girlfriend, giggling with her at hidden-camera footage that shows the suitors misbehaving at a party and helping her to make the undoubtedly difficult decision to dump the guy who slipped off into a bathroom to share a few intimate moments with a hula dancer. The show has spawned plenty of off-camera controversy—the spurned suitor later claimed that the sound of a zipper opening, heard through the bathroom door, was a sound-effect added in post-production—but primetime audiences' enthusiastic reaction to it has skipped over one huge question: What does it say about our society that we now consider Monica Lewinsky qualified to help anyone find her soulmate?

Lewinsky's show is only the latest in a whole slew of dating-based "reality" TV shows, which include "The Bachelor," "Meet My Folks," "Married by America," "Blind Date," "The Fifth Wheel," "Elimidate," "A Dating Story," "Dismissed," "Rendez-View," "Change of Heart," "Shipmates," "Temptation Island," "Looking for Love," and "EX-treme Dating." In my personal favorite, "Joe Millionaire," 20 women were whisked to a romantic French chateau to compete for a man's affections. The women were told the young man had recently inherited $50 million and was "looking for a special someone to share his newfound wealth." I spent the show's entire seven-episode run wondering where Fox managed to find 20 grown women gullible enough to believe that a tall, underwear-model-handsome guy with $50 million might need professional help in finding a date. But the success of these shows—40 million viewers tuned in to watch Joe Millionaire choose his guileless mate—shows how much we love to watch other people date, especially when there's a better-than-decent chance of witnessing an emotional trainwreck. Why do so many eligible singles prefer to sit at home watching other people go out to dinner, walk hand-in-hand, and smooch in bubbling hot tubs than actually go out on dates? When did we start to consider dating a synonym for hell?

It's almost impossible to find a positive depiction of contemporary dating anywhere. Television sitcoms from "Friends" to "Frasier" delight in the antics of lovelorn singles—not because they're more glamorous than their married counterparts, but because the vicissitudes of

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modern dating lend themselves to easy laughs. In novels, we see Bridget Jones as the modern-day counterpart of Jane Austen's Elizabeth Barrett—only somehow the centuries have robbed our heroine of her ability to bring Mr. Darcy to his knees.

Wasn't the sexual revolution supposed to make courtship more fun? Yet everywhere we look, we see single people bemoaning the loneliness, the despair, the just plain drudgery of dating. Dorothy L. Sayers once said, "The only sin passion can commit is to be joyless." But how much joy is there in courtship these days? Dating, it seems, has become a necessary chore, rather like scrubbing down the storm windows.

The Rules of Court

Something has gone drastically awry in the process of meeting and mating. I recently played confidant to a friend who has valiantly decided to re-enter the courtship arena. From her description, it sounded like she was applying for a new job—reading the want ads, circling anything that sounded halfway promising, sending in her résumé via e-mail, and then trudging out on a series of high-stress interviews. (The only difference was, most employers usually don't advertise until the post is actually vacant, whereas at least one of her hot prospects hadn't quite gotten around to telling his wife that the family organization was planning to downsize.) To hone their "interview" skills, desperate affluent singles are driven to hire dating consultants to tell them how to do it right. One New York consultant bragged to Fox News that she charges her female clients $350 for a half-hour consultation to assess the dateworthiness of their hair, makeup, and wardrobe, while men pay $15,000 upfront for introductions to a dozen eligible prescreened women. That fee also includes a virtual date with the consultant, who then scrutinizes the poor insecure fellow's manners and conversational skills.

For those who can't afford individual instruction, there are guidebooks like *The Rules*, billed as "time-tested secrets for capturing the heart of Mr. Right." The authors promise their husband-hunting readers that faithful adherence to a few basic rules, such as "Never Call Him, Always Let Him Call You" and "Don't Talk Too Much" will help them land the spouse of their dreams. (From the vision of dainty femininity sketched out in *The Rules*, one reaches the inescapable conclusion that all the eligible bachelors out there have posters of Donna Reed plastered above their beds.) The bad news, of course, is that once a girl has adopted the primly determined *Rules* persona to capture him, she has to keep up the hard work in order to keep him. Hence, *The Rules for Marriage*, the follow-up to the runaway best-

Photo Courtesy of Fox TV

Monica Lewinsky's new job: doling out her sage dating advice as host of Fox TV's new dating-based reality show, "Mr. Personality."

seller. Hewing firmly to *The Rules* over the course of four or five decades is a daunting prospect, as the recent divorce of one of The Rules co-authors confirms.

Dueling Rulebooks

Perhaps the continuing popularity of *The Rules*—in spite of its co-author's marital track record, they're still charging $3.99 a minute for dating consultations—is a sign that singles today are desperate for some set of principles to follow. Unlike the well-established courtship rituals of the 1950s, what we have today is a motley set of individual expectations, most of them patently mystifying to everyone but ourselves. Courtship has become an unending pick-up game of playground ball, with each player operating according to his or her own individual rulebook. A woman may make a seductive gesture fraught with symbolic meaning—only to find that, to her partner, it's a request for a time-out.

Take, for example, this star-crossed couple who poured out their story of dueling social semiotics to a women's magazine a few years ago. Both sides agree that he invited her out on a dinner date, and that they had a wonderful time until the bill was presented. "When the

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dinner check came, I took it," explained 32-year-old Charlie. "But Susie reached for her wallet. 'Can I help pay?' she asked. My heart sank. I was sure she didn't like me. I figure if a woman wants to split the check, she's telling you that she wants to be friends. After that, the evening ended kind of awkwardly. I didn't know if I should kiss her or anything, so I kind of hastily said good-night."

Susie, 28, told the reporter that she saw the encounter very differently. "I offered to split the check because I didn't want him to feel obliged to pay for me. I figure if he had really liked me, in a girlfriend/boyfriend way, he wouldn't have taken my money—not on the first date, anyway. And I guess I was right: he didn't try to kiss me or say anything about another date."

It's revealing that teenagers no longer "date" in the traditional sense. Instead, they move in intersecting herds, and actual dating is reserved for those who are already official couples. Formal events, such as homecoming and prom, are arranged with the help of intermediaries: The parties involved set up embassies in the lunch room, and send out ambassadors to arrange the necessary treaties. When one young swain recently called and directly invited a 16-year-old girl to Homecoming, her parents gave the courageous young man two thumbs up. But the girl herself was put off. "It seems so forward, just calling and asking someone out like that," she explained after declining his suit. Her parents are now resigned to a life without grandchildren.

The Lost Art of Flirting

At the risk of being stripped of my right to wear Birkenstocks, I have to admit that the courtship rituals of the 1950s make me feel a little wistful. The gender roles may have been constricting and the shoes were impossibly tight across the toes, but it's impossible to deny the now-guilty pleasures of sweetheart bouquets, dinner dates, and nightclubs where heterosexual men danced voluntarily. (And I'm far from alone in my nostalgia, as proven by the release of a recent retro-romance movie, *Down With Love*, starring Hollywood A-listers Renée Zellweger and Ewan McGregor.) I can't help envying the "smart and sophisticated woman" described by Helen Gurley Brown—author of the once-scandalous *Sex and the Single Girl*—who responded to men's advances with this polished reply: "You're really lovely, but do you honestly suppose I can sleep with every man who asks me? The answer for now is no." Brown claimed that one importunate suitor finally gave his iron-knickered lady a silver charm engraved with the words, "We'll see."

I can just hear the anguished screams of "That's just game-playing!" And that's exactly correct. Both parties were playing a game—defined in my dictionary as "a way of amusing oneself; a pastime; diversion." The game was called "flirting," and it's what people used to do while they were trying to decide whether they might be able to stand each other's company over the hyperextended road trip that is married life. It's funny: The men who most oppose the idea of "playing games" in courtship are the same ones who can spend endless hours debating the merits of the designated hitter rule. In all forms of human behavior, there are rules. (For instance, we now shake hands upon introduction instead of sniffing each other's sweat glands.) The trouble is, the rules governing courtship today are vexing and often destructive, reducing the stuff of poetry to something akin to emotional dodgeball.

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One Rule To Ring Them All

Why is dating today so stressful? The answer is simple: Sex.

I know. That sounds perilously like those counter-feminist conservatives who rail at modern woman for coldheartedly indulging her lustful desires instead of saving her precious flower for the lucky man who will someday lift her bridal veil. But my argument is based not on morality but on sheer utility: The way it's been done lately, courtship isn't any fun.

That's because there is currently only one broadly accepted rule of courtship: The Third Date is The Date (unless, of course, you're a glued-together-at-the-knees *Rules* girl.) If either party declines sex on the Third Date, it's a clear sign that the relationship is going nowhere. And if the Third Date culminates in sex, they're officially a couple—or at least, the guy's a real loser if he doesn't ask the girl out again afterwards. (Sex before the Third Date is a signal that a) you believe in love at first sight; b) you're a promiscuous floozy; or c) you think a, he thinks b.)

It's time for all of us to admit that this courtship model simply doesn't work. If lightning doesn't strike by Date Three, you can end up walking away from a perfectly lovely person who might just be a little shy, or having a bad hair day. Or worse, by rushing headlong into a "committed relationship" with someone you've met only a few times, you can end up wasting weeks, months, sometimes even years of your life on someone you don't really like very much, on the grounds that you're already "invested" in the relationship.

The problem is, we can't bring ourselves to admit that we're going to have to give up the prospect of instant sex—however rarely it actually happens—for a longer period of pre-intercourse courtship. That's understandable—and not just because we all like to think of ourselves as the proud owners of constantly pulsating loins. Given how dreadful dating has become, we hate to think of prolonging the agony as we wait for the only foreseeable good part. (Though from what I hear from my single girlfriends, the sex isn't all that hot, anyway.)

But if we could decide collectively that sex is worth waiting a bit longer for, we'd find that courtship itself might become a lot less stressful and a lot more fun. Right now, those first couple of dates are incredibly intense; we give ourselves only six or eight hours of conversation before deciding whether we want to commit to a monogamous sexual relationship. If we had, oh, six or eight—maybe even 10—dates to make up our minds, we could focus more on the actual date and less on its sequel. By investing a few extra hours in the process, we might draw out of a shy person an unexpected vein of sardonic wit or a deep well of political insight. With luck, we'd screen out some of those false charmers who have learned to conceal their meanspiritedness for a week or two. And after the eighth, ninth, or 10th date? Well, let's just say that some things are greatly improved by anticipation.

Heroic Couplets

I suppose I should make a confession here: I haven't done any dating for a long, long time. I'm what *Bridget Jones* author Helen Fielding would call a "Smug Married." And quite frankly, when I hear my single friends bewailing their dating lives, I do feel a bit complacent. But when I think about what courtship could, and should, be, I remember one night when my husband and I went out to celebrate some double-digit wedding anniversary.

Television sitcoms from "Friends" to "Frasier" delight in the antics of lovelorn singles—not because they're more glamorous than their married counterparts, but because the vicissitudes of modern dating lend themselves to easy laughs.

We'd hired a babysitter, gotten all dressed up, and treated ourselves to dinner at some sleek new restaurant in the city. A comfortable, compatible married couple, we were having a very nice time—joking, relaxing, knocking back a little too much Chardonnay. Then we noticed the man and woman sitting next to us. They were visibly trembling with desire. (The waiter didn't bother to ask them if they wanted dessert.) It was clear that this was no standard Third Date, to be promptly followed by a tidy hour of pre-programmed abandon. There was none of the awkwardness of fresh acquaintance, no conversational false starts or miscues. It was obvious they were madly in love, and that they were looking forward to a long-awaited, devoutly wished consummation. They were co-adventurers, taking that first exhilarating leap over Niagara Falls. And somehow, as we sat watching that couple from the smooth safety of the shallow waters far downstream, we didn't feel smug at all.

To me, that's what courtship ought to be. And if it's not, we're doing it wrong. ●

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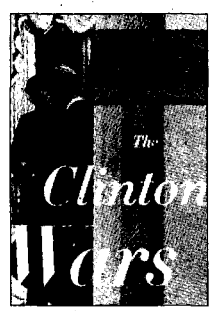
The Clinton Warrior

Face it: Sidney Blumenthal was right.

BY DAVID GREENBERG

IT'S LIKE A TALE FROM KAFKA: SIDNEY Blumenthal awoke one morning to find himself transformed into a snake. "Rattle, rattle, rattle. Hisssssssss," editorialized *The Weekly Standard* during the Republican drive to impeach Bill Clinton. "Sidney Blumenthal is a creature of the dark." During Clinton's presidency, Blumenthal, previously known as a cerebral political journalist for *The New Yorker* and *The New Republic*, came to be demonized for his links to the Clintons—denounced as the devil, as "Sid the Human Ferret," and as "Sid Vicious," a Democratic Chuck Colson. *The Clinton Wars*, Blumenthal's new memoir, is really several books in one: *apologia pro vita sua* of a man who was pilloried but long kept silent; an insider's view of the most fascinating administration since Nixon's; a sociology of the contemporary Right; and a usually even-toned but sporadically gleeful settling of accounts with old adversaries.



THE CLINTON WARS
by Sidney Blumenthal
Farrar,Straus & Giroux, $30.00

Buried within *The Clinton Wars* are also thoughtful discussions of Clinton's domestic and foreign policies—including, notably, reminders of his efforts to combat terrorism, which give the lie to the recent blame-shifting claims by the Bush men that their predecessors dodged the issue. Yet the heart of this book is, appropriately, the 1998 campaign by Independent Counsel Ken Starr, Republican leaders, and their allies in the so-called conservative movement to impeach the president—a morass into which Blumenthal, as a high-level White House aide, was inevitably drawn.

In its account of the impeachment, *The Clinton Wars* follows the outlines of the legal writer Jeffrey Toobin's now-standard work on the subject, *A Vast Conspiracy* (1999). But it gains freshness from Blumenthal's personal perspective, from his new material (most compellingly his interviews with some former antagonists), and from his insights into the workings of the increasingly ruthless conservative movement. If it tosses some barbs at former tormentors, and if it indulges in the self-justification intrinsic to political memoirs as a genre, *The Clinton Wars* is nonetheless a vigorous, bravura performance that brings home again what a tragedy and travesty Clinton's impeachment really was.

Pack Rats

Little in Sid Blumenthal's early career seemed to mark him for the fate of Republican *bête noire*. In the 1980s, he was a rising star in political journalism, writing for *The New Republic* and *The Washington Post*. His well-received books illuminated structural trends in postwar American politics, from the ascendancy of image-making consultants to the rise of the power-keen conservative movement. His magazine writing forged beyond the workaday columnist's easy opinionating to grapple with deeper forces in American history and political culture, a la Garry Wills or the best of Teddy White. An unabashed liberal, Blumenthal was often unsparing toward his ideological opposites, but his robust argumentation made him no less shrewd an interpreter of the scene, no less enlightening to read.

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In mid-1992, Tina Brown, tapped to be the new editor-impresario of *The New Yorker*, summoned Blumenthal to lunch at the Royalton Hotel. Praising his coverage of Clinton's primary campaign, she asked him to join the ailing weekly as her Washington editor, to write, he recalls, "opinionated and informed" dispatches in the swashbuckling British style she knew best. The choice made sense. Clinton was the rage, *The New Yorker* was liberal in its traditions, and Blumenthal was not just a respected journalist but was friendly with and had sympathy for the wunderkind who seemed to be hurtling toward the White House.

For a while, Blumenthal did his job without controversy. As his sometime *New Republic* colleague Michael Lewis argued in 1999, "The stuff he wrote, because it came from the inside, was often riveting ... It was true that the pieces he wrote were wildly partial to his subjects. They didn't dish the dirt. But they had real value: they gave you some idea of what life was like inside the skin of our new president."

Then came the feeding frenzies of Whitewater, Filegate, Travelgate, Haircutgate, Troopergate, and other would-be scandals. Throughout these controversies, Blumenthal not only continued to write admiringly of Clinton, with whom he had developed a professional friendship over the last half-dozen years; he also chided his scandal-mad colleagues—as he had since 1988, when a prowling press forced Gary Hart from the presidential race for marital infidelity—for descending into sexual scandal-mongering. Appearing on "Nightline" in December 1993, he urged the news media to scrutinize those who were retailing the Clinton scandals. But given the mood of the moment, with Clinton on the ropes, Blumenthal notes, "This 'Nightline' appearance marked me as somehow having crossed the line from the media's side to the President's." Consigned to the doghouse of Washington society, he endured a cascade of *ad hominem* attacks.

These attacks were peculiar. After all, dozens of Washington journalists enjoy cozy contacts with presidents and reflect these friendships in their writing. Far from paying a price, they are celebrated. George Will consorted with Ronald Reagan, to no detriment to his career. David Frum cashiered his service as a speechwriter to the incumbent into a best-selling book, *The Right Man*—only to return to writing pro-Bush pieces. In a slightly different vein, Tony Snow was the liaison between anti-Clinton dirt peddlers Linda Tripp and Lucianne Goldberg and now styles himself a disinterested newscaster for Fox.

More to the point, Blumenthal was by and large correct about his fellow Washington journalists during Whitewater, many of whom mistakenly thought they were onto a real scandal. As Blumenthal explains in *The Clinton Wars*—which also contains no small amount of press criticism—reporters tend to assume that heeding their time-honored professional code of questioning authority requires a knee-jerk adversarial stance toward any serving president. To be sure, in an actual scandal, like Watergate, probing skepticism can help pierce the herd mentality of press corps regulars disinclined to rock the boat. By the early 1990s, however, a different dynamic had taken hold. The media were newly eager to delve into politicians' sex lives and ready to credit tenuous claims of high-level wrongdoing. One result was the spread of what Blumenthal calls the "pseudo-scandal": a phony set of charges trumped up by a politician's enemies to play to the media's taste for vice. As Blumenthal notes, the pseudo-scandal upends journalistic values: The press pack scrubs its vaunted skepticism and succumbs to mass gullibility, lapping up innuendo and even deliberate lies in a race to the bottom.

In 1993 and 1994, ordinarily responsible journalists, swept up in the chase, betrayed astonishingly few doubts about claims that began with Clinton's ancient enemies like Sheffield Nelson and Jim McDougal—or, worse, with card-carrying right-wing hit men like David Brock and Ted Olson of *The American Spectator*. (Blumenthal reveals that Brock, who later recanted much of his reporting, helped him piece together the *sub rosa* collusion among different anti-Clinton factions.) By late 1993, the media's credulity had allowed the president's inquisitors to seize the moral high ground in the dominant discourse. Those like Blumenthal who urged caution about Whitewater and Troopergate were scorned as patsies—even though in the end they were mostly proven right, with none of the first-term allegations against Clinton being borne out.

Jewish Consiglieri

Once Blumenthal joined the White House in 1997, the attacks on him metastasized from derision among fellow journalists for doubting the pseudo-scandals to demonization by the Right. It started the night before Blumenthal began his new job, when the conservative gossipmonger Matt Drudge posted an item on his Web site falsely accusing him of spousal abuse. Blumenthal and his wife sued, and Drudge retracted the report, but the suit dragged on for

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years, until eventually, in 2001, they dropped it so as to close a chapter in their lives. (Blumenthal doesn't say so, but he must have been galled to pay Drudge $2,500, "to prevent him from creating a false controversy" by counter-suing for legal fees.) And Drudge's attack was just the beginning.

Blumenthal's defamation by the Right peaked during the *annus horribilis* of 1998. In January, as soon as Drudge broke the news of Clinton's dalliance with Monica Lewinsky, the Republicans' impeachment drive commenced in earnest, and Blumenthal was drawn in further. In his role as a White House political aide, he shared with reporters various news articles that cast doubt on the behavior of some of Clinton's antagonists, including Starr's prosecution team. As a result, Starr subpoenaed him to appear before a grand jury. Soon, Starr's men were blackening his name among the press corps, many of whom were already ill disposed toward him, branding him the ringleader of a "Nixonian" White House campaign to discredit the investigation.

In the next year, Starr's office, congressional Republicans, and sympathetic reporters wrongly renewed these and similar charges, claiming that it was Blumenthal who spread the notion that Monica Lewinsky was a deranged "stalker" or a scorned woman who invented her affair with Clinton; in fact, the "stalker" theory originated when *Newsweek*'s Web site reported the contents of the famous "Talking Points Memo"—guidelines on how to spin the affair written, it later emerged, by Lewinsky herself—describing the former intern that way. Others, including George Will, Bill Kristol, and Tim Russert, groundlessly asserted that Blumenthal was responsible for divulging the news of House Judiciary Chairman Henry Hyde's affairs; in fact, that disclosure came from a Florida retiree named Norman Sommer, whose friend Hyde had long ago cuckolded.

Beyond the false accusations, Blumenthal was subjected to a malicious invective that sometimes verged upon the anti-Semitic. Michael Ledeen of the *National Review* compared Blumenthal to the "Jewish consiglieri" of the Mafiosi. *Vanity Fair* quoted a blind source disparaging "a certain kind of Jewish family" from which Blumenthal came. After the impeachment was over, Rep. Mary Bono cheerfully told Blumenthal that her fellow GOP Judiciary Committee member Lindsey Graham "sure had a good time making fun of your name." The revelation of this right-wing anti-Semitism, normally assumed to be obsolete outside the Buchananite fringes, is disturbing. And yet Blumenthal recounts these comments with equanimity, as if he has become so inured to his Kafkaesque fate, so accustomed to the perils that befall a foot soldier in the Clinton wars, that he scarcely needs to note the vileness.

Blumenthal can be scathing. He unfairly dismisses Bill Powers—one of his critics, and, it so happens, a friend of mine—as an "unexceptional conservative"; neither word is apt. But if Blumenthal tweaks his old adversaries—*The Washington Post*'s Susan Schmidt, a leading scandal-beat reporter, comes off particularly poorly—on the whole he remains rather stoical. Instead of venting, he generally seeks to understand why the House impeachment leaders, and others on the Right, so reviled him. "I fitted their stereotypes," he realizes. "They didn't know me, but ... they could observe that I was Eastern educated, a 1960s graduate, from the liberal media, Jewish, intellectual." He appreciates, too, that in the end the attacks weren't really about him. Blumenthal-hating was always an extension of Clinton-hating, and, to his credit, Blumenthal never forgets that it's Clinton-hating he must explain.

Starr Witness

At moments, Blumenthal seems to regret conceding center stage to the Clinton-haters. He insists that Clinton was not unduly distracted by his accusers, that even during his darkest hours he ably fashioned policy, mastered the budget, and came down hard on terrorism. Indeed, Blumenthal makes a special point of highlighting Clinton's awareness of the growing dangers of Osama bin Laden and violence against Americans: Clinton demanded funds to defend critical infrastructure, pushed money-laundering and counterterrorism bills, and, above all, integrated these initiatives into a comprehensive vision of "indispensable" American leadership. The problem was that the media—and all of us—cared more about impeachment.

And rightly so. Monday-morning quarterbacking (or, if you prefer, Sept. 12 quarterbacking) is no substitute for history. In the 1990s, Ken Starr's investigations did matter more than Osama bin Laden, not because Starr was right to investigate but because of the fierce culture war of which these pseudo-scandals were convulsive symptoms. They deserve a prominent place in accounts of Clinton's presidency, for history consists not just of policies and programs but also of the passions that a president evokes, the symbolic meanings he embodies. For Blumenthal to devote the bulk of his book to discussing policy (which in this 800-plus-page tome nonetheless

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receives ample treatment) would have seemed like willful distortion. If Blumenthal's book has been, in a sense, hijacked by the impeachment-bent Republicans, his focus on scandal merely exemplifies the tragedy of Clinton's presidency.

When it comes to the pseudo-scandals, especially the impeachment, *The Clinton Wars* draws on many other books besides Toobin's, notably those of Peter Baker, Marvin Kalb, Gene Lyons, and Joe Conason. Blumenthal shows once again the existence of what has been called—at once ironically and literally—a vast right-wing conspiracy: the collaboration among Republican activists, Paula Jones's legal team, and Ken Starr's office to bring about Clinton's impeachment. Blumenthal's reconstruction of events reminds us that if not for the secret collusion between the lawyers for Jones, who was suing the president for sexual harassment, and Starr's Independent Counsel's office, which was investigating him over unrelated Whitewater charges, Starr would never have been able to convince Janet Reno to let him expand his probe into Clinton's sex life, and the protracted struggle of 1998 could never have come about.

But *The Clinton Wars* goes beyond other impeachment chronicles, even apart from the personal material. Dusting off his reporter's notebook, Blumenthal landed interviews with several of his former attackers that add to the historical record: an unnamed prosecutor in Starr's office (who seems have been Bruce Udolf); Sam Dash, the "ethics adviser" to the Independent Counsel who quit in late 1998 to protest Starr's decision to testify against Clinton before the House Judiciary Committee; and Jim Rogan, the House member who led the questioning of Blumenthal during his deposition in Clinton's impeachment trial. From the prosecutor, we get inside confirmation of Starr's deputies' extensive, illegal leaking. From Dash, we get the searing judgments that "this was a mean-spirited, politically motivated investigation" and that "Ken [Starr] is capable of saying anything so long as you don't have him on tape." From Rogan we learn that the House Republicans deposed Blumenthal and not Betty Currie, Clinton's secretary, because with Vernon Jordan already on the docket, "The senators told us it would look like you're beating up on black people."

The Moral Minority

More important than these new details is Blumenthal's dissection of the state of the conservative movement, where this book's ultimate importance probably resides. Those who are put off by Blumenthal's unstinting defense of himself and his president should nonetheless value his acute political analysis. Indeed, *The Clinton Wars* can be read as part of Blumenthal's continuing study of the Right, a follow-up to his *Rise of the Counter-Establishment* (1986), which traced the movement from its World War II-era "remnant" through its heady Reagan years. In this quasi-sequel, covering the years of the Democrats' return to power under Clinton, the Reagan triumph has crested and gives way to frustrated, flailing Clinton-hating. The scandal-mongering that beclouded Clinton's presidency represented both a venting of the Right's rage at liberalism's quiet victories on the issues of sex, race, and religion and an evasion of conservatism's own political weaknesses on those issues.

From the start, many in the media accepted the Right's basic "narrative" that the impeachment and other scandals were about Clinton. But to much of America, these ordeals were mainly about Clinton-hating.

The main flaw of Toobin's estimable *A Vast Conspiracy* was its rickety thesis that the impeachment was about the takeover of politics by legal stratagems. *The Clinton Wars* more accurately locates not "law" (which was always a smokescreen) but rather a culture war at the heart of the saga. This view is not a partisan one. Henry Hyde was only one of many Republicans to endorse it, while many liberals and Leftists had a hard time recognizing that the impeachment was about matters larger than Clinton personally.

At one point in *The Clinton Wars*, the president himself proposes to Blumenthal that the Right just wants power for its own sake, a claim that echoes the popular view that the impeachment, and the 2000 election recount fight (which Blumenthal also retells), were pure power struggles in which each side did whatever it could to win. But while those two critical episodes of the Clinton presidency do underscore the new conservative resolve to win power at any cost—a resolve intensified by Clinton's success-

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es—the thesis fails to reckon with the Right's real and specific agenda.

Another unsatisfactory explanation for Clinton-hating is that it stemmed from a dislike of Clinton's personal qualities, notably his verbal evasiveness and deceptions. Countless other politicians of all stripes are equally slippery and mendacious but don't incur the same wrath. Nor does Clinton's record provide a clean answer; though mocked as a 1960s anything-goes liberal, he governed mostly as a moderate, devising a new Democratic rhetoric, vision, and program on such issues as the budget, welfare, crime, and national defense that severed the party's last ties to its 1972 McGovernite identity.

Where Clinton truly offended the Right was on the cluster of issues surrounding sex, race, and religion. Notwithstanding the post-1960s backlash against "permissiveness," Americans have grown increasingly broadminded on these matters, as Alan Wolfe showed in *One Nation, After All* (1998). Clinton not only championed toleration in his policies (at least most of the time) but, more important, he personally embodied the new ethic. He was the first Baby Boomer to win the presidency; a white Southerner at ease with blacks; the husband of a confident career woman; an avid learner who liked the company of Jewish intellectuals; and a man comfortable (indeed, perhaps too comfortable) with his sexuality.

Clinton's attackers, on the other hand, mostly came from those elements unreconciled to the new toleration. When Bob Barr disparaged Clinton supporters as not being "real Americans," when Tom DeLay said he pushed impeachment to promote a "biblical worldview" that Clinton didn't share, or when Ken Starr touted his own marital fidelity and his daily singing of Christian hymns, they revealed their own alienation from the emerging live-and-let-live consensus. In this context, the Right's more sinister swipes at the Jewish intellectual Blumenthal—not to mention its resolve to press ahead with impeachment in the face of public outcry—becomes more comprehensible. These are the death throes of a retrograde morality.

But what about members of the press who didn't share this pinched morality yet abetted the Right's crusade? Weren't they responding to something about Clinton, not the culture wars? Here, too, Blumenthal is illuminating. From the start, many in the media accepted the Right's basic "narrative" (Blumenthal's useful term) that the impeachment and the other scandals were about Clinton. To a large segment of America, in contrast, these ordeals were mainly about Clinton-hating—about the Right's rearguard efforts to repeal advances in social tolerance and equality. After the initial January 1998 spasm of media madness following Drudge's Lewinsky scoop, a good minority of journalists—some avowedly pro-Clinton, others hostile to the president but skeptical of the Right's aims—advanced what Blumenthal calls "a different narrative about the burgeoning scandal." The focus shifted from whether Clinton had lied about an affair to the more serious subject of why he was being investigated (and possibly impeached) for it. "Starr, his methods, his prosecutors, the political character of his case, and the activities of the right wing properly became subjects of controversy."

Too many journalists—Susan Schmidt, Tim Russert, Jackie Judd of ABC—remained captive to the Republicans' script. (Russert, Blumenthal suggests, once even lied to protect Starr. After attributing a story to Starr's office at a moment when Starr was under fire for leaking, Russert publicly insisted that he had ascribed his tip to "congressional" sources.) Perhaps these reporters had become too dependent on their right-wing sources. Maybe they had grown convinced of Clinton's arrant immorality. Most likely, they simply lacked the nimbleness of mind to see the issue in its broader context; superficiality and groupthink remain the cardinal sins of press corps, especially television reporters. Yet in the end these journalists were left marooned with their sources on a rock of Clinton-hating long after the public had repaired to higher ground.

To be sure, many worldly-wise, professedly neutral Washington types will read this book as the self-serving defense of a wounded partisan. And there certainly are many places where Blumenthal does seem too charitable toward Clinton (for example, he faults Lani Guinier herself more than the president for the failure of her 1993 nomination as assistant attorney general for civil rights). But the central problems with our political culture that Blumenthal identifies and smartly analyzes remain with us—from the Right's win-at-all-costs methods to its religious wing's antipathy to the tolerance of diversity. Whatever their view of Blumenthal or the president he served, inside-the-Beltway skeptics should remember that for the most part, when it came to the motives and goals of the conservative movement, the Tim Russerts, Susan Schmidts, and so many other "neutral" reporters were wrong, and Sidney Blumenthal was right. ●

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Ball Boys

Why golf is the driving obsession of middle-age alpha males.

BY JAMIE MALANOWSKI

THERE'S A GREAT MOMENT IN Barry Levinson's classic film *Diner* in which the young husband Shrevie, played by Daniel Stern, is asked by one of his buddies if he's happy being married. "I don't know," he sighs, before proceeding to air a big but. "When you're dating, everything is talking about sex. Where can we do it? Why can't we do it? Are your parents going to be home so we can do it? ... Then when you get married, you can get it whenever you want. You get up in the morning, and she's there. And you come home from work, and she's there. And so all that sex planning talk is over with ... I cannot hold a five-minute conversation with my wife."

And thus is revealed the great secret problem of adulthood—finding things to talk about once there's no more talk about sex. Of course, you can find other people with whom to talk about having sex, but that's an awful lot of work—more, if you get caught. You can talk about work, which for most people is a subject gleefully and immediately abandoned at quitting time. You can talk about one of the pastimes you have developed to replace talking about sex—barbecuing, for example, or watching "Six Feet Under"—but these are invariably less interesting than talking about sex, and you and everyone else knows it. But the human being is a determined animal, and more and more people, especially men, are finding an acceptable substitute: Golf.

Golf is almost always there. You can always go golfing, or think about golfing, or practice golfing, or think about practicing golfing. You can play golf at home, or you can play golf when you're away. Many people can play golf at work, and many people—Ken Lay, for example—work while they play golf. You can also drink and play golf, and you can gamble and play golf, and, as many elites have discovered, you can drink and work and gamble and play golf, all in one tax-deductible, Dick Cheney-defended outing. But golf can more than be played—it can be endlessly discussed. There are strategies and tactics, equipment and terrain; legends and lore and hallowed grounds. Sex may be a more primally interesting subject, but sex really doesn't require quite so many accessories, and your companions' tolerance for hearing your stories about whatever is the equivalent of landing in a bunker or being stuck in the rough or messing up a two-foot putt is substantially lower. Perhaps only war affords more various topics of conversation, but I believe that I will live long enough to see the birth of a new biathalon combining golf with live fire, and because it will be more interesting than watching drones obliterate SUVs, golf will eventually surpass war. Furthermore, golf has many rules, which many people observe and many more observe when others are looking, which means that golf attains in some minds the equivalence of a moral code. Finally, many people find golf fun. Or have at least convinced themselves that they do.

FIRST OFF THE TEE: Presidential Hackers, Duffers and Cheaters From Taft to Bush
by Don Van Natta Jr.
Public Affairs Books, $26.00

WHO'S YOUR CADDY? Looping for the Great, Near Great and Reprobates of Golf
by Rick Reilly
Doubleday, $24.95

Golf can also be written about, which is a tremendous boon to children of all ages who feel that they must, however grudgingly, observe Father's Day, the most manufactured, "yeah, right" holiday on our calendar. Golf is an activity that has been brilliantly present-ized. Many people have grown rich designing items in the $20-$50 range—golf shirts, golf caps, golf gloves, golf-ball-imprinted ties, and so on—that can be easily obtained and tossed into Dad's lap on the third Sunday in June. Publishers have grasped this, and the six or seven weeks before Father's Day has become golf book season in

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your bookstore.

Among the offerings this year are *First Off The Tee: Presidential Hackers, Duffers and Cheaters From Taft to Bush*, by Don Van Natta Jr. of *The New York Times*, and *Who's Your Caddy?*, by *Sports Illustrated* columnist Rick Reilly. The two authors have very distinct personalities—Reilly is a professional cut-up who seems contractually bound to deliver two jokes every three sentences, while Van Natta is a very fine investigative journalist who brings to his work the seriousness of a hog hunting for truffles. Both, however, believe the same thing: that through his golf game is the inner man revealed.

Photo courtesy of Public Affairs

Bush: Whacker.

"Almost everything is revealed on a golf course—a player's shortcomings and strengths, most of all, but other subtleties of personality and foibles of character that you may never see across a desk," writes Van Natta. "Because so few presidents could play with any consistency, the game presents itself as a clear prism to view how these powerful men tried to cope with all that can go wrong."

I guess. But of course all human behavior reveals character, and while we might learn a great deal about our presidents from their golfing—and make no mistake, Van Natta thinks he's got the Rosetta Stone here—one might fairly wonder if we wouldn't learn as much about their inner lives from watching how they get through a weekend with their in-laws or what rides they avoid at Disney World or conducting an in-depth audit of their tax returns. Indeed, there may be less predictive power about their presidencies in watching how they golf than in watching whom they golf with. It's true that you can see the combination of awkwardness and determination that characterized Richard Nixon's golf game as a reflection of the awkwardness and determination he displayed in his political career, but you can also see that same awkwardness and determination displayed when he was courting Pat. She decided she wanted to date another fellow, so Nixon chauffeured them. It's more reflection than revelation.

This is clearest in the book's most entertaining chapter, an account of the round of golf Van Natta played with ex-president Bill Clinton. There was some history between the two: When Clinton was in the White House, Van Natta investigated Clinton's suspiciously low golf scores. He found that the president made liberal use of do-overs and practice shots to deflate his score by approximately 15 strokes. This article appeared in the midst of Clinton's scandals, and was one of a number of tough articles Van Natta wrote about Clinton. It was, however, the only one Clinton objected to, leading Van Natta to conclude that the president cared more about being accused of cheating at golf than cheating on his wife. Van Natta freely admits to being a bit star-struck playing with Clinton, and falls under the spell of his adversary's easy-going, live-and-let-live approach to keeping score. He ends up concluding that golf thus reveals Clinton to be an untrustworthy charmer. (Like you needed to step onto a fairway to know that!) You wonder what Van Natta could find out if he sat Clinton down with a Magic 8 Ball.

While the book's central thesis may be a little overstated, it's still entertaining for all the cool presidential golf trivia it includes. Didja know that Woodrow Wilson was golfing when he heard about the sinking of the *Lusitania*? That Warren Harding was called off a golf course to sign the documents officially ending World War I? That there was a golf-ball-shaped cigarette lighter on FDR's desk when he declared war against Japan? That Reagan was on a golf outing at Augusta when he heard of the bombing of the marine barracks in Beirut? *Huh? Didja? Huh?* Van Natta sees this Zelig-like omnipresence as a sign that golfing has deeply insinuated itself into the warp and woof of American history. I think it's a sign that even presidents must sometimes grope for things to talk about.

Van Natta also manages to include some offbeat material, including Nixon's laugh-out-loud observation

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that golf was JFK's "secret vice." Imagine what a donkey Sy Hersh must feel like now—almost 500 pages of *The Dark Side of Camelot* about sex, drugs, and mob connections, and he missed Jack's secret vice. Van Natta also manages to wedge in the most famous quote about vice presidential golf, namely Marilyn Quayle's observation that "Dan Quayle would rather play golf than have sex any day." One is tempted to make an unkind remark here, but it's too hard to choose among the candidates. And fortunately, the book went to press late enough to include George W. Bush's contribution to presidential golf—his post-suicide-bombing comment from the links on Kennebunkport: "I call upon all nations to do everything they can to stop these terrorist killers. Thank you. Now watch this drive." One nugget is missing: While Van Natta makes use of Patrick Buchanan's memoir *Right From The Beginning* to discuss Nixon's awkward swing—when Pat was 15, he caddied for the then-vice president—he neglected to include another of Buchanan's recollections, namely, watching as Nixon peed in the bushes. In a case of almost literary foreshadowing, by the way, Pat immediately followed suit.

Photo courtesy of Public Affairs

JFK: He's got that swing.

Rick Reilly's whole book is something like the Clinton chapter in Van Natta's: His idea was to go golfing with a number of famous people and tell about it, except his idea is not to golf with them, but to caddy for them. Reilly ended up caddying for a number of professional golfers, including Jack Nicklaus, as well as Donald Trump, Deepak Chopra, and Bob Newhart. Among the things the reader will get from this book is an understanding that caddying is a helluva lot harder than it looks. All of those who have been taken in by the glamorous fantasy of donning a pair of overalls and traipsing after people dressed like Ken dolls will be disabused here. Not only do you have to lug the clubs, but you also have to be part diplomat, part psychologist, part tactician, and part doormat. Still, caddying at the highest level can be quite lucrative. The caddies earn a fee for working a tournament, plus a percentage—typically 7 percent—of their lord and master's winnings. Reilly didn't take any money for any of his caddying efforts—I presume he's getting something from the publisher—but at one tournament, caddying for a pro who finished 13th, his take would have been an $1,800 fee plus a $4,550 share of the winnings.

The best chapter in this generally lively book is the one about Deepak Chopra. It starts off strongly: Reilly meets Chopra on a 45-degree day. Reilly has wrapped himself in layers, but Chopra appears in a short-sleeved cotton shirt. When Reilly wonders if Chopra isn't cold, Chopra says no, he's a trained swami and knows how to maintain his own temperature. "It's very simple, really. You simply imagine a bonfire in your rectum." Chopra is interesting because, unlike the other golf-lovers in the book, he doesn't much care about keeping score. "One should play golf the way one plays the game of life," he says at one point. "You can't get caught up in the ego." Reilly accepts this, but there's a slight tonal difference in this chapter. He doesn't disrespect Chopra, but it's clear he has much more respect for the people who are either good players or want to be. It's interesting that something similar happens in Van Natta's book. Lyndon Johnson didn't golf very much, and was pretty bad at it. But when he did golf, he strode around the course, happily whacking the ball a couple hundred times as he completed his round. If he didn't like his shot, he took another—although, unlike Clinton, LBJ never pretended to approach par. Van Natta disdains this approach; for him, it's not a case of somebody goofing around, it's a violation of the spirit of the game. He far prefers the competitiveness shown by the other Hackers-in-Chief, but there he's not unusual. To most of the pros and the amateurs in these books, and to their authors, and to most golfers at large, scores do matter. Perhaps that's why all the Shrevies of the world have found some semblance of satisfaction in its grip. ●

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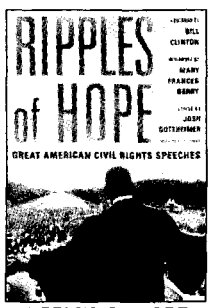
Political Booknotes

Speech Therapy

By Tom Wicker

MOST ANTHOLOGIES ARE collections of the familiar. A splendid exception is *Ripples of Hope: Great American Civil Rights Speeches*, edited by Josh Gottheimer. It includes not only selections from the inspiring but oft-told story of how American blacks emerged, first from slavery, then from sharecrop peonage, finally from the shadows of Jim Crow into full legal citizenship, but also readings from the women's, Hispanic American, Asian American, and gay rights movements.



RIPPLES OF HOPE:
Great American Civil Rights Speeches
Edited by Josh Gottheimer
Basic Civitas Books, $30.00

A former speechwriter for President Clinton (who contributes a foreword) Gottheimer attributes the inspiration for his book to his White House days: "While rummaging through the bookshelves of the White House Library ... I could not find one book to put on my office shelf, no single volume containing the fiery rhetoric of DuBois, the drawling prose of Lyndon Johnson, or the measured verse of Berry Friedan. This collection was crafted to be a central source of civil rights speeches for writers, activists and students of history."

The anthology's title is taken from Robert Kennedy's notable speech to the National Union of South African Students in Cape Town on June 7, 1966: "Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

In American movements for justice and equality, the ripples began early and never stopped coming. In 1789, three quarters of a century before Lincoln freed the slaves, an unnamed Negro, whose words are presented here, paraphrased Shakespeare to ask: "Has not a Negro eyes? Has not a Negro hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions ... If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you poison us, do we not die?"

Ripples of Hope is more than a repository of texts. It allows readers to see how decades- and centuries-old themes still reverberate and echo today. In the first of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's many speeches, delivered at Seneca Falls, N.Y., in 1848, she declared the root principle that "woman herself must do this work ... Man cannot speak for her because he has been educated to believe that she differs from him so materially that he cannot judge of her thoughts, feelings, and opinions by his own." From the same rostrum 150 years later, Hillary Rodham Clinton picked up the same idea: "Stanton was inspired, along with the others who met [in 1848], to rewrite the Declaration of Independence and they boldly asserted that 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal.'" All men *and women*, apparently an idea that never troubled the confidence or consciences of the Founding Fathers.

While the movement for gender equality has produced many fiery, well-known orators like Stanton, other civil rights struggles have left quieter, though no less poignant, legacies. Though they were hard-working, law-abiding immigrants, Asian Americans long endured widespread, deeply entrenched, but mostly accepted suspicion of the "Yellow Peril." Despite having built the transcontinental railway, achieved a successful agricultural economy, and made many other signal contributions to the national life, it was not until long after World War II that a strong civil rights movement on their behalf came into being. Even then, it was different from other such efforts, being mostly led by militant student organizations and having few recognized spokesmen.

Gottheimer includes congressional testimony from a Nisei journalist, James Omura, opposing Japanese American internment during World War II, when U. S. citizens were crammed into the equivalent of concentration camps: "Are we to be condemned merely on the basis of our racial origin? Is citizenship such a light and transient thing that that which is our inalienable right in normal times can be torn from us in times of war ... [W]e should not be prejudged and ... racialism should not be the yardstick by which our loyalty is measured."

Ripples of Hope reminds us, too, that as late as the 1950s, Mexican Americans and most Latinos "were denied the rights of citizenship, worker protections and equal access to basic education and health care"—even while their labor was highly valued, particularly in the Southwest. Only after the charismatic Cesar Chavez of California, in 1962, formed the National Farm Workers Association (later the United Farm Workers of the AFL-CIO) could a harvesters' strike he led against San Joaquin Valley grape growers spread into a nationwide civil rights movement for Chicanos. After a hunger strike in 1968, Chavez—too weak to speak—sent this message (read aloud by the Rev. James Drake) to his followers and to the nation:

"It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life ... the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally non-violent struggle for justice."

Martin Luther King made just such a sacrifice and still was able to say on the last night of his life that God had "allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy tonight ... I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the

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coming of the Lord."

Just one night later, before a hushed crowd of blacks in Indianapolis, where he was to have made a campaign speech, Robert Kennedy broke the terrible news that Dr. King, who "dedicated his life to love and to justice for his fellow human beings," had been murdered. Then Kennedy added what often has seemed so futile, in America as elsewhere: "Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks said so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world."

This familiar story and King's martyrdom owes much to a less-remembered black—A. Philip Randolph, who founded the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and forced the Pullman Company and the railroads to accept it. Randolph organized a black "march on Washington" for July 1, 1941, to protest racial segregation in defense industries. Fearing the consequences as World War II threatened, FDR asked him to call off the march. Randolph flatly refused. Whereupon the president signed Executive Order 8802, a true landmark document prohibiting racial discrimination in the hiring of defense industry workers. The modern civil rights movement for blacks may be said to have begun at that point.

That movement could be said to have climaxed—though there was much left to be done—on the night of June 11, 1963. Alabama's governor, George Wallace, had just refused to permit two black students to enter his state's university. President Kennedy took to television and declared from the bully pulpit: "We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution ... [T]his nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free ... We face, therefore, a moral crisis as a country and as a people."

No other president had termed racial conflict "a moral crisis;" never had the federal government so openly taken a stand for the rights of *all* its citizens. And though it was left for Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, to push through the great Civil Rights Act of 1963 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (as well as to tell Congress in the familiar words of the black spiritual, "We shall overcome"), JFK's proclamation of a "moral crisis" may well have been the turning point in the basic civil rights campaign of our history.

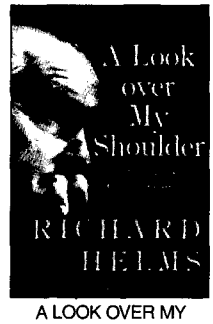
Basic, but not final. As Mary Frances Berry notes in an afterword, the speeches in this collection "bring to life the unfortunate reality that the goal of equal opportunity for all remains elusive."

TOM WICKER *was an op-ed page columnist for* The New York Times.

Pucker Up

By Loch Johnson

RICHARD HELMS WAS THE most debonair of the nation's 18 Directors of Central Intelligence (DCIs). Tall, smartly dressed, fluent in French and German, a specialist in European affairs, he was a natural for the spy business. Like many who would rise to the top echelon of American espionage, Helms started out as a member of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the World War II precursor to the CIA, whose initials, insiders joked, also stood for "Oh, So Social" due to the social climbers who filled its ranks.



A LOOK OVER MY SHOULDER:
A Life in the C.I.A.
by Richard Helms, with William Hood
Random House, $35.00

This memoir, written by Helms shortly before he passed away last year, takes the reader from his OSS days through his battles with Congress over intelligence abuses and his own misleading testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the 1970s.

Settling old scores is often a prime motivation for writing one's memoir, and Helms has a list of *bêtes noires*: President Richard M. Nixon, former CIA Director William E. Colby, Sens. Frank Church (D-Idaho) and Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), and Rep. Otis Pike (D-N.Y.), among others. Much of his book is given over to rebutting and defending those who attacked the CIA during his tenure. In this regard, few compare to Nixon, whose animosity toward the CIA was no secret. Nixon considered it an enclave of left-leaning, Ivy League aristocrats who looked down at him and, worse still, secretly aided John F. Kennedy in the 1960 presidential election. While there is no truth to the latter allegation, Helms reveals that Nixon dismissed the CIA's reporting as "worthless," and the agency in turn seldom sought his advice, even banishing him for a time from meetings of the National Security Council. The president later tried to drag the CIA into the Watergate cover-up but Helms blocked him. Nixon then fired Helms shortly before his mandatory retirement after promising not to do so. Not surprisingly, Helms's portrayal of Nixon in this book is hardly flattering.

Colby's sin was cooperating too fully with investigative committees after *The New York Times* published reports in 1974 about alleged domestic spying and questionable covert action in Chile. Both the Ford administration and Congress established panels of inquiry. As Helms's successor, Colby faced two options: He could stonewall until investigators ran out of time, money, and patience, or he could cooperate in hopes of winning their goodwill and avoiding a draconian response. Helms instinctually advocated the former approach; Colby chose the latter, believing, according to his memoirs, that lawmakers might otherwise dismantle the agency. In Helms's memorable phrase, Colby "lost his pucker." Especially vexing to Helms was Colby's suggestion to investigators that Helms might have perjured himself in testimony before Congress. Further, Colby gave investigators documents that implicated Helms in various aspects of the scandal.

Helms's choicest invective, though, is reserved for Church and Pike, who led the subsequent con-

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gressional inquiries in 1975. (I served as Church's assistant during this investigation and have a rather different interpretation of events.) To Helms, the Senate and House inquiries amounted to a "ransacking" of the CIA's family jewels by publicity-hungry lawmakers. Of course, from my vantage point, the CIA had violated its mandate by spying on American citizens who had only exercised their First Amendment rights to oppose the war in Vietnam or to join the civil rights movement.

Nevertheless, the Church and Pike committees were far from perfect. In hopes of gaining public support for intelligence reform, Church tried to dramatize the hearings and as a result sometimes came across as grandstanding, while Pike lost control of his overzealous staff. Yet the intelligence transgressions could hardly be ignored, and both panels had serious members (including Church and Pike) who labored diligently to restore the CIA and the FBI to their proper roles of protecting American citizens, not spying on them.

When called to testify before the Church committee, Helms suffered a convenient case of amnesia, maintaining that he had signed too many documents during his long tenure at the CIA to remember them all. One of the documents he was asked to explain was the Huston Plan, a master spy plan from 1970 bearing his signature and those of three other intelligence chiefs, including J. Edgar Hoover. Helms again dismissed the document as another forgettable memo that crossed his desk, but given the sweeping nature of this authorization to allow the CIA, the FBI, and military intelligence to spy on American citizens, that's extremely hard to accept. Indeed, a few days after signing the paper, Hoover came to his senses, went to the White House and removed his support, prompting President Nixon to rescind the plan—although the CIA continued its domestic spying.

Another source of trouble for Helms was undoubtedly Sen. Symington and his fellow members of the Foreign Relations Committee. In 1973, they called him to testify publicly about his knowledge of CIA involvement in Chile. Helms denied under oath that the agency had any involvement with efforts to overthrow the Chilean government—a brazen lie. His justification for it was that he had promised Nixon never to reveal the operations against Chile. Moreover, he reasoned, this panel had no official jurisdiction over the CIA; therefore, he did not have to tell these lawmakers the truth. This episode has become a famous case study in intelligence circles. Did Helms make the right choice? A court of law subsequently decided against Helms, convicting him of an embarrassing misdemeanor for failing to tell the full story to the committee—a conviction that he claimed was a "badge of honor" and did indeed make him something of a hero in the eyes of some intelligence officers. The proper response, however, would have been to go into executive (closed) session, where Helms could have discussed the true details about the CIA's involvement in Chile without publicly revealing the highly classified facts of the operation.

Helms provides a *tour d'horizon* of key CIA operations from 1947 until his retirement in 1973. Particularly insightful are his recollections of the Johnson administration and its refusal to accept the CIA's candid and accurate appraisals of the souring war in Vietnam. Yet, Helms adds little to the existing histories of the other crises that engulfed the nation and its intelligence services during this period. Nor does he have much to say about his life as a diplomat in Iran following his departure from the CIA, or why the agency failed to anticipate the Shah's downfall soon after Helms's tenure as ambassador ended.

And the occasional attempts at legerdemain are a detraction, as when Helms writes that the "CIA had never assassinated anyone," without noting that it had tried frequently—especially against Fidel Castro—and failed.

As DCI, Richard Helms could never bring himself to level with Congress. Too often, his memoir suffers from this same guarded quality. After all, when you're a spy, what's most important is not to inform congressional overseers or educate the American people about intelligence—it's to keep your pucker.

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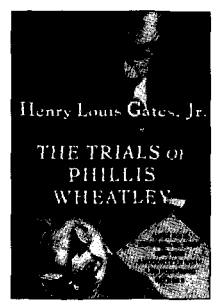
Captive Genius

By Terry Edmonds

Henry Louis Gates's latest book, *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley*, is more than the story of America's first black poet; it recounts the opening chapter in a struggle for literary and racial identity that began in the 18th century and continues to this day. Much like its title character, the book, though small in stature (only 107 pages), is full of powerful surprises.



THE TRIALS OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY:
America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters With the Founding Fathers
by Henry Louis Gates Jr.
Civitas, $18.95

The biggest surprise of all is that only 12 years after her 1761 arrival in Boston on a slave ship, speaking only Wolof, her native tongue, Phillis Wheatley was publishing the first book of poetry in the Western world by an African-American writer. Wheatley's masters, John and Susanna Wheatley, and their daughter, Mary, first opened the door to this stunning achievement. For reasons not fully known, this trio took it upon themselves to tutor young Phillis in English, Latin, and the Bible. It was not long before the precocious black child was writing and publishing poetry clearly reflecting the influence of such literary giants as Alexander Pope and John Milton.

Phillis Wheatley's reputation quickly grew in England, where her first and only volume, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, was

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published in 1773. While she was not accorded as much acclaim in the United States, her literary talents did attract the attention of both Benjamin Franklin and George Washington, and she became a darling of American abolitionists, who pointed to her achievements "as proof positive of the equality of the African, and therefore as a reason to abolish slavery."

But many white Americans impugned Phillis Wheatley's authenticity by defining her as nothing more than a classical "imitator." In fact, some, like Thomas Jefferson, insisted that it was virtually impossible for blacks, whom he considered mentally inferior to whites, to produce great art or poetry. To Jefferson, "The compositions composed under her name are below the dignity of criticism."

But for me the greater tragedy of Phillis Wheatley's life, as described by Gates, was not the doubt or scorn rained upon her by skeptical whites, who, against all evidence, could not bring themselves to believe that an African slave girl could write poetry that captured the attention of both King George and George Washington. After all, Wheatley's achievements were validated in her day by other members of the white intelligentsia, a recognition that not only loosed the shackles of her own literary dreams, but proclaimed the humanity of all African people and paved the way for what has become a remarkable African American literary tradition. That alone should have secured for her a place of undisputed veneration, especially in black literary circles. But, unfortunately, that has not been the case, and that is the greater tragedy. Hard as she struggled during her lifetime to gain the recognition she deserved, the indignities heaped on Wheatley in the years after her death, at the hands of her own people nonetheless, have inflicted an even greater injustice to her legacy.

Gates describes how, what he calls "the politics of authenticity" infected criticism of Wheatley's work by 19th- and 20th-century black intellectuals and writers, who denigrated her for not speaking out more forcefully against slavery. The genesis of this antipathy is traced to an eight-line poem Ms. Wheatley wrote when she was 14 entitled "On Being Brought from Africa to America."

The first line reads: " 'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land." The poem is an indictment of her African roots and a paean to her captors and their religion. Encountered with 21st-century sensibilities, it is a poem devoid of any trace of black pride. Even though Ms. Wheatley later wrote and spoke out powerfully against the human costs of slavery, the damage was done. Looking back at Wheatley from the vast expanse of two centuries of civil rights protest and progress, these modern day African-American critics have declared that the 18th-century prodigy was not "black enough," or worse, an Uncle Tom.

This double bind of denigration, from both the whites of her day and the blacks of ours, is the most fascinating aspect of Gates's story. Many black writers and professionals live in a similar cultural purgatory today. Anyone who has worn the proud but heavy mantle of a black "first" knows that, for a while at least, white stares of skepticism and white arms of condescension come with the territory. It is also true that success in the white world can cause an estrangement of sorts from black roots and lead to a life lived in cultural limbo. Thankfully, for Phillis Wheatley the downside of her black success, though seeded during her lifetime, only fully sprouted after her death.

TERRY EDMONDS *is a Washington public affairs director, a poet, and the first African-American speechwriter for a U.S. President, having served as Chief Speechwriter for President Bill Clinton.*

Drug Antics

By Merrill Goozner

IN A NATION WHERE MOST people worship business—and where business controls politics—it often takes a tragedy to convince lawmakers to protect the public from predatory corporate practices. It took a Great

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Depression and revelations about Sam Insull's utility stock holding company schemes before investors got a Securities and Exchange Commission. America's cities choked on smog, and one of its rivers burst into flame, before President Richard Nixon signed the law creating the Environmental Protection Agency.

Nowhere has this connection between horrific events and "regulatory creep"—the deliberately obfuscating phrase favored by conservative deregulators—been more apparent than in the evolution of the nation's food and drug laws. Only after Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* alerted average Americans to the human butchery taking place inside meatpacking plants did Congress, in 1906, create an agency to test for food safety. "Every new social relation begets a new type of wrongdoing—of sin, to use an old fashioned word," trust-busting President Theo-dore Roosevelt said as he signed the bill into law. "And many years always elapse before society is able to turn this sin into a crime which can be effectively punished by law."

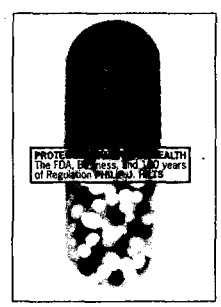
THE BIG FIX:
How the Pharmaceutical Industry Rips Off American Consumers
by Katharine Greider
Public Affairs, $14.00

That original legislation also required drug labeling, but not much else in the way of regulating the pharmaceutical industry. It wasn't until 1938, a year after the nation was traumatized when 100 children died from taking an anti-infective suspended in antifreeze, that the government finally required that new drugs be safe before being put on the market. But the law, which still didn't require companies to submit test data to the FDA—it was up to the agency to prove drug wasn't safe—was grossly inadequate to its task.

Over the next three decades, the drug industry introduced thousands of new medicines. Americans could pop pills to fight infections and pain, relieve high blood pressure and excess stomach acid, curb depression and sleeplessness, control diabetes and a few cancers.

Sen. Estes Kefauver, a latter-day trust-buster from Tennessee, was not overly concerned with drug safety when he set out to investigate the drug industry and its "antibiotic cartel." He wanted to know why drugs cost so much when they cost so little to produce. In wide-ranging hearings in the early 1960s, he exposed virtually every practice of the modern drug industry: its penchant for developing drugs that mimic the actions of those already on the market (so-called "me-too" drugs); its cartel pricing behavior; its overbearing and health-agnostic marketing practices; and its willingness to play the research card as a justification for outrageously high prices.

Yet legislation designed to curb the economic power of the drug cartel languished in committee, and no bill would have emerged if it weren't for thalidomide. A subsidiary of the conglomerate that made Vicks cough drops wanted to introduce the mild sedative to the United States. Fortunately, an eagle-eyed pharmacologist on the FDA staff named Frances Kelsey halted the drug's distribution after learning that European women had begun delivering babies with frightening birth defects. In response to public fears, President John F. Kennedy pushed through a bill that finally forced drug companies to submit safety data before it began marketing drugs. The drugs also had to work.



PROTECTING AMERICA'S HEALTH:
The FDA, Business and 100 Years of Regulation
by Philip J. Hilts
Alfred A. Knopf, $26.95

The law required companies to demonstrate drug safety and efficacy by conducting well-controlled and properly recorded scientific experiments. Over the next few years, the FDA reviewed thousands of drugs already on the market. Hundreds were withdrawn because they were no more effective than the elixirs sold at a 19th-century circus sideshow.

How the government used science-backed regulation to force the drug industry to modernize and innovate—with the industry fighting it every step of the way—is one of the two major themes running through Philip J. Hilts's lively history of the FDA. A former *New York Times* reporter who covered the agency, Hilts not only believes in the agency's mission, but by and large thinks it's done a pretty good job over the years. In keeping up with the latest scientific advancements, regulators have even taught the industry how to do its job better, and thus steadily elevated the quality of the food we eat and the drugs we consume. In any academic journal, one finds study after study whose parameters reflect the rules and regulations set at the FDA. "The scientific facts and social understandings needed for progress are not created in industry, or in universities, or in government," Hilts writes near the end of his survey, "but in all of them together."

His second major theme is that you can trust the drug companies about as far as you can throw them. If you want safe pharmaceuticals, you'd better keep a well-staffed, well-trained, and aggressive cop on the beat. A large part of the book is taken up with sordid tales of corporate malfeasance, most often cases where companies deliberately ignored warnings their drugs caused harm to an unacceptable number of patients. The worst cases invariably came to light at times when the industry had succeeded in temporarily curbing the agency's power. One thinks immediately of the drug class of 1997—a year that marked the most recent highpoint in anti-FDA furor in corporate and conservative circles. Five drugs ap-proved that year were subsequently withdrawn from the market for safety reasons.

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But most drug safety hazards today are not caused by unsafe drugs. They stem from inappropriate prescribing and from unanticipated drug interactions in people taking multiple prescriptions, problems caused largely by hypermarketing.

In recent years, a new generation of muckrakers has taken on the economic side of the industry, relying largely on critiques formulated by citizen activists and insurance companies upset by skyrocketing prices and the drug industry's willingness to subordinate public health in the name of higher sales and profits. Katharine Greider's *The Big Fix* is a breezily written survey that takes on every aspect of the modern medicine marketing machine.

Hoping to buy cheaper generics? The drug companies abuse the patent system to delay their introduction. Want to import cheaper drugs? Big Pharma gets the FDA to crack down in the name of safety. Are you buying one of those new and improved medicines coming out of drug industry labs? It's probably no better than the older, coming-off-patent medicine you used to take. Find yourself clamoring for the latest pain pill, even though over-the-counter ibuprofen works just fine? Guess what. Advertising works.

Hoping your doctor will sort out the mess for you? His tan is probably from the drug-company run seminar he just attended in Cancun; oh, and by the way, here's a free sample.

The drug industry's willingness to debase science is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of its growing economic clout. Drug companies increasingly dictate not only the terms of research, but also its dissemination. They determine the shape of clinical trials and who gets to conduct them. They increasingly control what gets published and how doctors learn about drugs. The result is an information marketplace skewed toward sales, not health.

Greider doesn't spend many pages on this information problem. Near the end of the book, she opines that "practicing good sense requires a very sophisticated analysis of the good we're getting for the money we're spending." But who can objectively compare drugs? Who should tell doctors whether the latest drug on the market is truly new and improved?

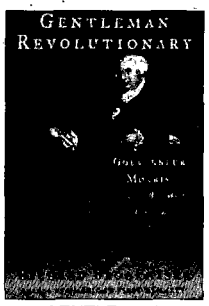
She provides no answer. Hilts does not even grapple with the question. But his history suggests it will take prudent regulation that relies on objective science to curb the current era of drug industry excess. One can only hope it won't take a tragedy to bring the issue into sharper focus.

MERRILL GOOZNER *is a former reporter for the* Chicago Tribune *and author of* The $800 Million Pill, *which will be published by the University of California Press in 2004.*

Founding Principal

By Matthew Dallek

SCHOLARS OF AMERICA'S FOUNDING, the historian Joseph Ellis has argued, tend to view it through one of two prisms. Some historians see the Revolution mainly as an effort to overthrow tyranny and secure individual liberties. For others, it was a period of nationalist fervor; not only did the colonists want to vanquish the British and assert their own rights, but they also desired a highly unified nation under a strong federal government that would create a future defined by peace and prosperity.



GENTLEMAN REVOLUTIONARY: Gouverneur Morris, The Rake Who Wrote The Constitution
by Richard Brookhiser
Free Press, $26.00

This basic tension—rights versus unity; individualism against nationalism—has been manifest through many periods of American history, but it suffused the politics of the founding generation. In *Gentleman Revolutionary*, Richard Brookhiser, who has written the biographies of several other founding fathers, has produced a life of Gouverneur Morris, a little-regarded founder of whom most Americans have probably never heard, yet who, in a sense, personified both strains of thought.

Morris believed in the cause of country. He supported the Revolution and helped author the Constitution, served as minister to France and championed the Erie Canal. Yet he was also a fierce individualist who retreated to private life whenever possible, and it is this person on whom Brookhiser focuses. Born into wealth in New York, Morris enjoyed a most advantaged upbringing. His grandfather had served as governor of New Jersey, his father was a prominent jurist and New York assemblyman, and Morris quickly became a leading lawyer and socialite.

But profound suffering also marked Morris's life. At age 14, he spilled boiling water on his right arm, and it was mangled forever. When he turned 29, he was run over by a carriage; his left leg had to be amputated. Morris took it all in stride. He spent time working on Morrisania, his New York estate. He struck up friendships. Ultimately, he took a wife and fathered a son. In spite of hardships, Morris lived life to the fullest. He earned money, traveled the globe, took lovers on two continents, drank the best wines, and ate the finest foods—and Brook-hiser isn't shy about voicing his approval. Morris "was no artist," he writes, "unless living is an art."

But Brookhiser also makes it clear that Morris impacted the life of the country. During the Revolution, he represented New York in the Continental Congress, becoming friends with George Washington and many more of the new nation's leaders. He secured payment for Army officers, proposed political and economic reforms, and told his friend Robert Livingston, "This is the seed time for glory." (He also complained of his colleagues: "Stuffed in a corner of America and brooding over their situation, they have become utter disagreeables.") But Morris's greatest contribution was his authorship of the U.S. Constitution. He served as a delegate to the Constitutional Con-

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vention, and when it came time to put pen to paper, it was Morris to whom the other founders turned. He wrote the Preamble from scratch, including the archetypal phrase, "We the People," and significantly strengthened the document's prose.

Some years later, Morris moved to Paris. He ensconced himself in the rarefied world of *fin-de-siecle* Parisian society, and then watched up close and in horror as his aristocratic friends fled the guillotine. As the Revolution progressed, Washington appointed Morris minister to France. He spent two years in the post, toiling to save Louis XVI, sheltering aristocrats from the Paris mob, and working hard to protect American merchant vessels against French privateers.

In the pantheon of the founders, Morris is no match for the likes of a Jefferson, Madison, or Hamilton. He spent too much time away from the fray to put upon his country such a lasting imprint. Still, he, too, left his mark on America, and one wishes that Brookhiser had spent less time in this book praising Morris the man and more time delving into the life and times of Morris the founder. During the Constitutional Convention, Morris thundered against the evils of slavery, an unusual stance for the time—yet Brookhiser never explains how Morris arrived at it.

Likewise, while there is much to admire in Morris's private life, Brookhiser spends too much time describing Morris's stoicism and verve, and not enough examining the crucial debates surrounding the nation's birth. Morris, concludes Brookhiser, can teach 21st-century citizens how to live a full life:

"His conduct, from his teens on, is marked by courage, courtesy, and warmth—by affection for his friends, sympathy for the afflicted and disdain for bullies. His example is still useful. The founding fathers can show us how to live as citizens. Morris can show us how to enjoy life's blessings and bear its hurts with humanity and good spirits."

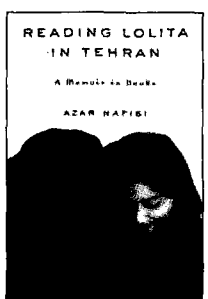
Perhaps. But in the end, the more interesting and pertinent question is not what Morris the man can teach today's citizens, but rather what Morris the founder reveals about the life of the nation at the start of its history. Had Brookhiser trained more of his attention to addressing that question, this would have been a more important book.

Matthew Dallek, a former speechwriter for Richard Gephardt, is the author of The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan's First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics.

Veiled Upset

By Cassius Peck

If you want to understand what it feels like to know the tug of modernity while living under the repression of mullah authority in Iran, talk to the young women there. In Kerman, I remember a group of young women I'd run into in the bazaar who waxed eloquent on the paradox of detesting Iran's regime while at the same time resenting the interference of outside powers. A young woman I'd met trekking in the mountains north of Tehran explained to me how an Islamic magistrate had told her she had to stop climbing to avoid the unconscionable situation in which she might slip and have to appeal for a helping hand from a man to whom she wasn't related.



READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN:
A Memoir in Books
by Azar Nafisi
Random House, $23.95

In Iran, the most systematic repression continues to be borne by the female half of the population, whose sexuality has always been the Islamic Revolution's driving obsession. The Islamic Republic of Iran's founding firebrand, Ayatollah Khomeini, launched his political career in 1963 by leading a protest against women's suffrage. Today, the figure-obscuring dress code known as hijab remains the Revolution's most visible and enduring legacy. Azar Nafisi, formerly a literature professor in Tehran and now director of the Dialogue Project at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies in Washington, has tethered her own exuberant digressions on living out this paradox to a memoir about a group of seven selected female students who, for three years, gathered in her apartment every Thursday to discuss banned works of Western literature. "I formulated certain questions for them to consider, the most central of which was how these great works of imagination could help us in our present trapped situation as women," she writes. "We were not looking for blueprints, for an easy solution, but we did hope to find a link between the open spaces in the novels provided and the closed ones we were confined to. I remember reading to my girls Nabokov's claim that 'readers were born free and ought to remain free.'"

The poignancy and importance of a handful of middle-class Iranian women rebelling by reading Nabokov is eloquently described in *Reading Lolita in Tehran.* One has to keep in mind the conditions these women faced when they walked out the door each day. "The streets of Tehran and other Iranian cities are patrolled by militia," writes Nafisi, "who ride in white Toyota Patrols, four gun-carrying men and women, sometimes followed by a minibus. They are called the Blood of God. They patrol the streets to make sure that women like Sanaz (a student in Nafisi's class) wear their veils properly, do not wear makeup, do not walk in public with men who are not their fathers, brothers or husbands." The literature Nafisi and her students read offers a nimble vehicle for negotiating terrain that can be heavy going. "Take *Lolita.* This was the story of a twelve-year-old girl who had nowhere to go. Humbert had tried to turn her into his fantasy, into his dead love, and he had destroyed her. The desperate truth of Lolita's story is not the rape of a twelve-year-old by a dirty old man but the confiscation of one individual's life by another." Lolita is indeed a fitting

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parallel for the confiscation of millions of Iranians' lives to satisfy the mullahs' politico-sexual fantasies.

At the same time, it's misleading to think of the Islamic Republic as a wholesale confiscation; the theocracy is at once more durable and more offensive to many Iranians precisely because it is articulated through a religious idiom that is shared by almost everyone. None of the women in Nafisi's class fits the American stereotype of Iranians as being either religious zealots wholly committed to the regime or irreligious hedonists aping pious behaviors because the mullahs force them to. Nafisi's students represent seven different attitudes toward Islam, toward the regime, and toward the future.

Not surprisingly, some members of the group are more concerned with matters of love than their political fortunes, though the two are inextricable linked. Nafisi describes Nassrin, a tough girl, permanently caught between two worlds, tradition and modernity, the daughter of a Western-educated mother and a stern and devout father. Sexually abused by a "pious" uncle when she was 11, she is preoccupied with understanding relations between the sexes. Another, Sanaz, a romantic well-practiced in avoiding Tehran's militias, hides her nail polish with black lacy gloves. Mahshid, with her European style hair, is the most religious of the group. Mahshid chose to wear hijab before the revolution as a mark of her faith but now resents the regime for forcing the scarf on others, as it makes her own gesture meaningless. Imprisoned by Khomeini's regime for five years for her involvement with a dissident religious group, she seems world-weary and bitter about the distortion of her religion. Possessing a strong sense of responsibility for her country, Mahshid is contemptous of those who simply want to escape.

The petty rules of the regime are effective in curtailing threats from the most oppressed half of the population. With their energies devoted to working out strategies of defiance, such as how to show more hair, or to conduct secret meetings with the opposite sex, grown women are forced into a permanent state of adolescent conniving. As a window on Iranian society, the book triumphs in revealing the psychological complexity and diversity of the beings who glide along Iran's streets as anonymous shrouds.

The book is least interesting in terms of the genres under which it will be marketed: "women's studies" and "memoir." Ironically, the book falls under "women's studies" only because Nafisi considered it too risky to include men in her clandestine seminar. In its memoir mode, *Reading Lolita* is riddled with distracting solipsisms. "Six a.m ... the first day of class. I was already up. Too excited to eat breakfast (who but taxi drivers, bakers, and garbage collectors are hungry at six?), I put the coffee on and then took a long, leisurely shower." Such asides distract from an otherwise steady flow of edifying intimacies about a fascinating and troubled country usually veiled to outsiders.

Reading Lolita in Tehran is not unlike the character of the country it describes: often intelligent and involving, as well as elegant, but still too often cloying and oppressive.

CASSIUS PECK *is a writer based in Europe.*

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Who's Who

By Susan Threadgill

This will come as no surprise, but word has it that the **Carlyle Group**—the defense-industry related investment firm run by such ex-Bushies as **Brent Scowcroft, James Baker**, and **Frank Carlucci**—has been letting **Colin Powell** know that the firm's doors are open to him should he decide to leave the State Department. That eventuality might come sooner rather than later, considering his continually diminishing position in the Bush administration.

Unnamed senior administration officials have already been quoted as saying that, in the wake of recent bombings in Israel, Powell's "road map" peace plan is a dead letter. Some have fingered NSC Middle East director **Elliot Abrams** as a source of these leaks—a reasonable assumption considering that Abrams openly badmouthed the road map before the Iraq war. But we hear that the real saboteurs are **Dick Cheney**'s ally on the NSC **Stephen Hadley** and Undersecretary of Defense **Douglas Feith**.

The New York Times Magazine's **David Grann** must be a good reporter to have convinced Senate Majority Leader **Bill Frist** (R-Tenn.) to let him listen in on a private phone call between himself and freshman Sen. **Saxby Chambliss** (R-Ga.) But Chambliss must wish Frist had a better press secretary. During the call, Chambliss asked for Frist's support in naming a high-rolling GOP donor to an economic development organization. "He has lots of dollar figures down there?" Frist asked. "That's exactly right," Chambliss replied. "And he did raise a chunk of money for me." "All right," Frist said. "You're a good man." Sounds like Chambliss's donor got his money's worth.

In March, "Who's Who" revealed efforts by **John Podesta** and **Harold Ickes**, both former White House chiefs of staff under **Bill Clinton**, to found a much-anticipated "Heritage of the left"—a progressive think tank that would give Democrats the kind of institutional muscle provided to the GOP by Washington's network of ideologically driven conservative think tanks. Now it's official. The new organization, dubbed the American Majority Institute, recently filed as a 501(c)(3). **Morton Halperin**, a Beltway veteran who's done stints both in the government and at top think tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations, will reportedly run the policy shop. Sources tell us that **George Soros** is one major donor, and that **Hillary Clinton**'s fundraising network will be put to work on behalf of the fledgling organization; the institute's movers and shakers want to raise $5 million this year and spend at least $10 million in 2004.

There's plenty of speculation about what, exactly, brought about the departure of **Jay Garner**, the retired general who led the Pentagon's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Aid—and consequently led Iraq—for exactly three and a half weeks. Clearly, the utter chaos in which Iraq remained during his month on the job precipitated his replacement, in mid-May, by retired State Department official **L. Paul Bremer**. Yet many inside the Pentagon aren't sure that Garner and his staff deserve the blame. "I think [Garner] was given the job but not enough assets to do it right," said one retired Army officer who served with Garner in Operation Provide Comfort, the mid-90s effort to protect Kurdish insurgents in northern Iraq.

But Iraqi citizens may not absolve Garner so speedily. They watched as the general and his staff—chiefly **Barbara Bodine**, a former U.S. ambassador to Yemen charged with overseeing Baghdad, and **Margaret Tutwiler**, a former assistant secretary of state in George H.W. Bush's administration who was supposed to be Garner's spokeswoman but who spent her tenure refusing to return press phone calls—set themselves up in one of Saddam's old palaces in a style reminiscent of the old British Viceroys of Iraq.

The palaces are heavily fortified and inaccessible to petitioning Iraqis. Phones were down, Garner rarely left the grounds, and visitors to his Gothic headquarters were met only by stone-faced American soldiers, who turned them away at the gates. Not exactly the best advertisement for a participatory democracy.

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